THE
NATION

APRIL 21, 1962 . . 25c

Spring Literary Issue

THE ARTIST ON SOCIETY

Fiction

Pursuit of the Real *Frederick R. Karl*

Poetry

The International Word *Paul Blackburn*

Drama

Search for Conflict *Tom F. Driver*

Painting

The American Finds His Country
Hilton Kramer

Talks With Mrs. Bertolt Brecht
Ben Shaktman

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LETTERS

Peace and *Realpolitik*

Dear Sirs: We appreciate the publication of "An Alternative to Slogans" (March 24 *Nation*). Our work at the Berkeley Community Peace Center has been based on the conclusion drawn by the authors, Anatol Rapoport and J. David Singer: "As long as the national policy maker sees the peace worker as either blind to the constraints under which the policy maker must operate or in uncompromising opposition to the demands placed upon him, the policy maker has little choice but to dismiss the peace worker as naive or as dangerous."

We congratulate the authors for reinforcing our efforts to help peace-concerned people develop the ability to communicate realistically.

ALLEN CARRICO BOB MARTINSON
GORDON GIBSON MIKE O'QUIN

Berkeley, Calif.

Protests Shah's Visit

Dear Sirs: We Iranian students in the United States protest the Shah's visit to this country. President Kennedy must not encourage the present government of Iran. The Shah and his Prime Minister, Amini, have committed many crimes against the people of Iran: they have jailed and killed teachers, students and other freedom fighters; they have closed the Iranian Parliament, banished elections, closed schools and universities, and violated the Iranian Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights.

Further U. S. support of Iran's dictatorship can only degrade this country in the eyes of the world.

IRANIAN STUDENTS
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles, Calif.

Peace Guide

Dear Sirs: Believing that a specific, easily implemented action program of peace action might be effective in influencing legislators, the press and the business community, Valley for SANE, a chapter of The National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, has launched a day-by-day calendar of activities for those already committed to the peace movement. *Daily Action for Peace* is now in its fourth issue. We are now mailing 10,000 copies per month, but the many organizations all over the country that adapt our program to local conditions and duplicate copies, considerably add to our distribution. Our plan is to seek sympathetic angels who will add to the spontaneous contributions and enable us to produce and distribute *Daily Action for Peace* in the hundreds of thousands.

Free copies of *Daily Action for Peace* are available to *Nation* readers who will write to Valley for SANE, Box 391, Encino, California.

ADELA MARITANO, Chairman

Let the People See

Dear Sirs: The San Diego State College chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union will soon begin production of a film dealing with capital punishment. Because this is primarily a student chapter, we envision a certain amount of difficulty in meeting the expenses of a forty-five-minute production.

Therefore, we are asking any reader of *The Nation* who has information concerning capital punishment, or who would like to contribute something towards the completion of our project, to send what he will to us at San Diego State College, San Diego 15, California.

ROBERT AMOS, President
A.C.L.U.

True Drama . . .

Dear Sirs: Having been in agreement (and thus in admiration) with Robert Hatch's film reviews for the year in which I have been reading *The Nation,* I was disturbed to see him tap particular truths in Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly* [*The Nation,* March 31] only to shatter the vessel irreparably by casting doubts on Bergman's honor as a director and by misinterpreting the nexus of this particular tragedy.

Mr. Hatch raises a good point in commenting that "madness as dramatic material . . . usurps the stage." As sheer spectacle, yes. But the maturation of psychological drama demands something more of the spectator than eyes alone. Reality has been taken out of the hands of the lunatic, but this does not preclude the tragic Karin as "a valid center for action." . . . Bergman is careful to reveal that Karin still retains a slim grasp on reality and that these poignant moments render her fully aware of her disintegration. . . .

I felt the heart of the drama to lie in the very adjustment—or fear of adjustment—of her family's real vices and virtues to Karin's illness. This justifies the focus of the film on something more than

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1962
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THE NATION

EDITORIALS

The Failure of Charm

The jolting announcement by U.S. Steel of an across-the-board price increase represents a calculated political ploy in the classic tradition of power politics; the economic motivations were of minor importance. Along with Mr. George Meany, Big Business resented the President's intervention in the steel negotiations; but Mr. Meany and other "statesmen" of labor — Jimmy Hoffa, who is not a "statesman," did not go along — muted their resentments and decided to cooperate, while the executives of Big Steel nursed theirs in private and plotted their revenge. Politics is about power and the ultimate question always is: Who is boss? Who is running the store? In most situations, the identity of the boss is so widely acknowledged that the question does not arise; but when it does, the classic ploy is for the incumbent to throw down an unmistakable challenge to the claimant. This is what Big Steel has done.

The manner in which the price increase was planned, executed and announced demonstrates that it was primarily intended as an exercise in power politics. The plan was prepared with stealth and cunning. Big Steel permitted the President and Mr. Goldberg to praise its restraint and statesmanship, its sense of national responsibility. It permitted the President and his advisers to accept the accolades that poured in from all sections and all quarters upon the signing of the "non-inflationary" labor contract. And then, when the President's triumph was at its zenith, Big Steel lowered the boom.

Several conclusions merit immediate emphasis. One is that a politics of maneuver, of persuasion and blarney, of adroit finesses, has its limitations. It will not work where basic conflicts are involved — as the two Roosevelts, Wilson and other Presidents have discovered. The Kennedy Administration has style and skill, but it has tended to rely almost exclusively upon political adroitness, sophisticated public relations, smart patronage politics and other techniques of modern political management which work well enough in routine situations, but which will not work when the chips are down. The Administration is so addicted to these tactics, so confident of its skill in political management, that it regards any showdown political fight as an exhibition of clumsy political management, of gauche leadership, of unsophisticated tactics. But in the long run certain showdowns are unavoidable.

The second conclusion flows from the first. With the overconfidence which accompanies great tactical skill, the President never seems to anticipate disaster in his major moves. He proceeds on the assumption that if the planning has been called expert by experts, it must be expert and therefore will work. Not necessarily so. Disaster can no more be certainly and consistently avoided than triumph can be guaranteed; the potential for disaster is a constant. And the President does not seem to have any defense-in-depth — any fall-back plan — when disaster strikes. In this instance, his "intelligence" services no more warned him of the possibility of disaster than the CIA warned him that Castro might know all about the clumsy invasion plans and be waiting for the invaders. The Bay of Pigs pattern is now repeated; the pigs are in Pittsburgh and they do not wear beards, but their security was tops, their intelligence first rate, their planning formidable. If the President learns from this second major defeat to place less reliance on his Irish charm and skill in political maneuver, it will add a dimension to his leadership that is sorely needed.

Still another immediate conclusion is indicated. In a "free enterprise" economy, Big Business does the planning — in its own interest to be sure, and often disastrously. Nevertheless, in our system, this is where the function rests. And until the federal government faces up to its responsibilities and decides to pre-empt the planning function — at least in terms of broad national planning of economic goals and objectives — Big Business will insist on its prerogatives. In a word,

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the political decision comes first: Who is to plan? Until this decision is resolved in favor of the federal government, labor cannot safely make any political deals with Big Business, with or without the government's assistance; Big Business will make its own deals, in its own ways and in its own interests, real or imagined. This is why William Gomberg, in an article on "The Future of Collective Bargaining" (*The Nation*, January 20, 1962), which was written with an eye on the steel negotiations — an article that is being more widely noted now than when it first appeared — emphasized that collective-bargaining techniques which work well in Sweden, where the government plans, may not work in this country, where Big Business plans. "Under the circumstances," wrote Mr. Gomberg, "the attempt of some members of the Kennedy Administration to impose a Swedish-style centralized bargaining policy on the AFL-CIO does not look very promising." It didn't then; it doesn't now.

Better Than Miltown

H. L. Mencken once suggested that the world might be better off if the entire population were kept continuously in a state of mild alcoholic inebriation. CBR (chemical, biological and radiological warfare), as described by the public relations staff of the Army Chemical Corps, seems almost as pleasant as Mencken's prescription. The indefatigable researchers of the Corps are reported to have made considerable progress toward a gas which "disorients a person, makes [him] incapable of realizing what he is doing. . . ." Released over New York or Washington, the gas would paralyze the population for several hours—"time enough for an army to march in and take over." Where the army would come from is not stated. Perhaps they would be the concealed subversives of General Walker, Dr. Schwarz and the Birchites, or maybe the gas would also be administered to our entire Air Force, so that its over-vigilant fighter crews, disoriented and paralyzed, would stand idly by while the paratroopers of Castro and Khrushchev landed on the White House lawn.

CBR unhappily also has sinister aspects and, given suitable agents, can compete with nuclear devices in mass slaughter. Anthrax or botulism germs, toxic gases and other lethal materials can be disseminated, either with or without a preceding nuclear attack. But the most attractive prospect, from both a CBR and economic standpoint, would seem to be radiological materials. Enormous quantities of radioactive wastes have accumulated as a by-product of nuclear-weapons manufacture. These wastes are stored underground and, in some cases, undersea. There are already 65 million gallons in storage; the cost of storage varies between $1 and $5 a gallon. The AEC is searching for safe methods of disposal that are more permanent and less costly than storage tanks. If this research effort were instead directed toward converting these materials into radioactive dust, the security of the free world would be enhanced. In effect, it would become possible to produce deadly radioactive fallout without a preceding nuclear explosion. Research can accomplish wonders, and this looks like a goal toward which our scientific magicians should be striving.

Where Is Heaven?

The idea of using radioactive wastes to exterminate mankind does not seem to have occurred to Peter Kapitza who, as director of the Soviet Academy of Science's Institute of Physical Problems, would be expected to have no other aim. As every schoolboy on this side of the iron curtain knows, all Soviet scientists are charged with malignant thoughts, while our scientists overflow with benevolence and work on weapons with only the purest defensive purposes. However, Kapitza is something of a freak. It has been reported that while Stalin was alive, he refused to work on nuclear weapons and was kept under house arrest for a time. He may, therefore, be regarded as the exception that proves the rule.

In this atypical role, in the April *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* Kapitza, discussing "The Future of Science," touches on the conquest of space. It is destined to play a great role, he says, but the only practical significance he can envision is the use of cosmic rockets to dispose of the waste from atomic reactors. "Transporting the slag to outer space will be quite safe for mankind," Kapitza suggests, "and will not be too expensive a solution because the rockets are relatively cheap." In the illimitable vacuum, the wastes can be allowed to cool off at their leisure.

In all innocence, the learned physicist has stirred up a theological hornet's nest. The Rev. Dr. Joseph Sizoo, Milbank professor of religion at George Washington University, denounced the plan as a "dreadful" desecration of the heavens "which proclaim the glory of God." The Rev. Samuel Kelsey, Bishop of the Church of God, went further, declaring that man has no business with space rockets in the first place. "When God created man he gave him the Garden of Eden to dress and care for," the good Bishop said. "It follows that man's dominion is the earth and not outer space." He warned of the wrath of an outraged God.

Bishop Kelsey and Dr. Sizoo were, however, outnumbered by other clergymen who not only saw no harm in the proposal, but approved it. "There would be no desecration of the heavens because heaven is not in outer space," Rabbi Philip Rabinowitz argued. "Heaven is a spiritual realm with a dimension all its own which is neither up nor down." This seems to dispose of the difficulty rather neatly.

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Apology in Order

Recently a nation-wide debate was scheduled on NBC's *The Nation's Future* between Richard N. Goodwin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and Carlos Fuentes, the distinguished young Mexican journalist and novelist (see his article on the Punta del Este conference, *The Nation*, February 24, 1962). The subject of the debate was one of great topical interest and significance: the prospects for the Alliance for Progress. Mr. Goodwin accepted the invitation on March 21, two weeks or more in advance of the scheduled date, with full knowledge that he would be opposed by Mr. Fuentes and with equally full knowledge, we may be sure, of Mr. Fuentes' background, interests and point of view. It may also be assumed that Mr. Goodwin's participation was "cleared" before his acceptance and that the debate was regarded by the State Department as being in the national interest. Yet, although Mr. Fuentes had visited this country last October, when his latest novel, *The Good Conscience*, was published here, this time he was denied a visa. The State Department could have granted a waiver if it had so desired; instead, it took the position that the debate was not in the national interest. Since this was not the department's original view, one can only assume that the department became afraid, once the issue was raised, that the granting of a waiver would produce an adverse reaction in Congress. A less likely explanation is that the Mexican Government, eager to get its fair share of Alliance funds, feared that Mr. Fuentes' presentation might antagonize American opinion and suggested to our Ambassador that a visa be denied.

In an open letter to be published in *Siempre*, of which we have a copy, Mr. Fuentes placed the blame directly on Ambassador Thomas C. Mann. "I understand this attitude in Ambassador Mann," he writes. "He is a left-over from the Eisenhower Administration and as such he fears ideas. Not long ago, Mr. Edward Kennedy, the President's brother, was in Mexico and had lunch with two left-wing Mexican intellectuals, Jaime García Torres and Pablo Gonzáles Casanova. Mr. Mann screamed to high heaven and went to great lengths in an effort to prevent the meeting. Apparently he thought that one of the Mexican 'Reds' carried a hidden dagger and the other a poisoned ring to be dipped in Mr. Kennedy's soup. But 'Ted' lunched with the writers, discussed many things with them and, it may be assumed, was enriched by the experience. A fossilized Ambassador would never understand this."

What concerns us about the Fuentes incident is not so much the national humiliation implicit in it, the general zaniness of the State Department's behavior, but the willingness of this Administration to abandon its stated objectives under fire. One of these objectives is to improve television fare, including, specifically, public-service programs. The bushwhacking campaign which Mr. Minow has been directing against the networks to achieve this objective has drawn our sympathy and sideline support; we have found very little to say on behalf of the networks and their affiliates. But Mr. Minow might profitably divert his critical gaze from the networks for a moment and rivet it on the State Department. In this instance, NBC had chosen a lively topic and two brilliant, well-qualified participants; the debate would unquestionably have illuminated and clarified many aspects of the Alliance for Progress program. But instead of supporting the network's initiative, the Administration negated it by a decision which came so late that NBC was unable to arrange a long-distance debate between Mr. Goodwin, in Washington, and Mr. Fuentes, in Mexico City. And what vital substitute fare was offered to the program's disappointed audience? Thirty minutes of Wanda Landowska at the harpsichord — welcome in its place, but this was not the place — and thirty minutes of *Update*, a children's news program.

Mr. Minow owes the networks — at least NBC — an apology for his strictures. Of all the humiliations implicit in this sorry affair, the least tolerable is the spectacle of a television network showing more courage and public spirit than an Administration self-dedicated, and with much fanfare, to "ideas" and "culture" and "new frontiers."

Did You Say 'Left'?

In its National Affairs Department, *Newsweek* (April 16) — echoing a theme that is receiving increasing attention from the press — suggests that "perhaps the uneasy peace between John F. Kennedy and the nation's liberal intellectuals was ill-fated from the beginning; perhaps discomfort on the Left was destined from the start." In this view, in the 1960 campaign Mr. Kennedy managed to make himself acceptable to the labor movement, the campus liberals, the editors of the "low-circulation but influential intellectual magazines," etc., but "he never was *really* one of the visceral liberals." (Italics *Newsweek's*.) Having thus casually identified liberalism with leftism, *Newsweek* proceeds to give evidence that the love affair so ambiguously begun is cooling off fast. But to this low-circulation but (hopefully) influential weekly, both the premise and the evidence are less than convincing. It is almost as if Mr. Kennedy, under relentless attack from the Right and intent on preserving his image as a man of the middle, had availed himself of the services of a clipping bureau to show that the Left was just as critical of him.

Joseph Rauh of the "all-out liberal" Americans for

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Democratic Action leads the parade of the disillusioned, as presented by *Newsweek*. Grudgingly, Rauh admits that compared with Ike or Nixon, Kennedy is okay, but "compared to the 'high hopes' we had, he's a bitter disappointment." Indictments follow under three main heads. In foreign affairs, Dr. H. Stuart Hughes, professor of history at Harvard and not heretofore noted as a flaming radical, complains that our military commitments are still dangerously over-extended: in the offshore islands, Vietnam and other places. Another suspicious character, Sen. Henry M. Jackson, is cited as a critic of the undue influence of the United Nations in our national decision-making. Other members of this cell are Max Ascoli, publisher of *The Reporter*, and Sidney Lens, director of United Service Employees Union Local 329 (Chicago).

Under economic policy, Leon Keyserling, President Truman's economic adviser, deplores chronic unemployment and demands a higher growth rate, an expanded and continuing public-works program, and other measures which sound as if the President himself were speaking. Walter Reuther pays tribute to an "impressive array" of Kennedy achievements, but wants more of the same. Clyde Ellis, general manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, is dissatisfied with Interior Secretary Stewart Udall's private-power leanings, and "New Deal economist" Oscar Gass, in *The New Republic*, questions whether national employment will be augmented by primary concentration on international trade.

Then there is some cautious caviling at Administration efforts to promote integration. Summing up the general case, David Riesman, the Harvard sociologist, is quoted as saying: "We wish the Administration well. . . . We are critical, but we are not alienated. We are also not sanguine. But we are not wholly disaffected either." This hardly sounds like the stentorian voice of the true Left. With its formidable array of radar antennae, seismographs, radiation meters and other apparatus for the detection of leftism, *The Nation* has been unable to find more than traces of this deadly menace since, say, 1948. And *Newsweek*, unless it has some private advices too awful to disclose, seems to be in the same case. What it has accumulated seems to be no more than the normal beefing of what, in any other country, would be the Center. It will hardly counterbalance the missiles which rain on the President from the Right.

Americans for Salan

Everyone has heard of the Freedom Fighters for Katanga — their periodic full-page advertisements extolling Tshombe and excoriating the United Nations make it impossible to overlook them. Undeservedly, another great rightist-patriotic organization has been sadly neglected. The freedom fighters for whom this group is prepared to give all, or nearly all, are those who, not content with shooting down Moslems in the streets of Algiers and Oran, recently burst into a hospital and massacred ten patients in their beds. The corporate name of these partisans of the Secret Army Organization is the American Committee for France and Algeria, its headquarters are in New York City, its chairman is Clifford Forster, a New York attorney, its secretary-treasurer is Samuel L. Blumenfeld, a publisher, and its members include James Burnham and Thomas Molnar of the staff of *National Review*. It publishes a monthly newsletter, *Today in France*, which tries "to get the true story of the Algerian situation to American newspaper readers because American correspondents report only what the French government tells them."

The author of this statement of purpose is Joseph Manfrini, fifty-five, resident manager in San Luis Obispo, California, for a New York stock brokerage firm. Mr. Manfrini spoke freely to Gene Blake of the *Los Angeles Times*. "We are all rightists," he said. "I don't think any of us are members of the John Birch Society, if that makes you feel any better." Presumably this did make the reporter feel better, and he must have been in a state of positive euphoria on hearing that the loyalty of the American Committee for France and Algeria is "100 per cent to the United States." About Mr. Manfrini's personal loyalty there can be as little question. He is a lieutenant colonel in the Corps of Engineers of the U.S Army Reserves.

Mr. Manfrini was most moving when he spoke of ex-French General Raoul Salan, who is now commanding general of the OAS. He described the terrorist commander as "decent, kindly, cultured, educated." If these qualities are lost on the assassinated Moslems and their surviving relatives, they have only to put themselves into Salan's place. Salan can't take prisoners, Mr. Manfrini explains: he has no place to put them. So what can he do but kill them? And yet he is moderate in his killings. The reason the OAS uses plastic bombs is that there is no fragmentation. The real creator of the terror is de Gaulle. As for the FLN, with which de Gaulle has made peace, they are a bunch of Marxists and Communists, actual or incipient. No matter what they say, they will establish a Marxist state. Since they are Communists, their promises mean nothing.

Mr. Manfrini has close connections with French rightists. "My understanding of colonialism is completely European," he explains. "I feel that a colonizer of necessity must be superior to the colonized and this belief has been another reason for my ability to get along with the French. I have lectured on colonialism."

That makes everything clear.

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THE ARTIST on SOCIETY

THIS special issue is designed to combat the prevalent belief that the modern artist has somehow managed to resign from society and is conducting his business in the outer space of his own soul. The belief is not plausible, but it must be granted that the recent language of creation has done a good deal to foster it: disengagement, the anti-novel, the theatre of the absurd, abstract expressionism *are terms tending to emphasize a tension between art and the concerns of commerce and public affairs. But tension is not withdrawal. Cursed with imagination and haunted by memory, the artist today can afford neither tower nor garret: he feels the world spinning out of control beneath his feet and is dancing for his life — and the lives of us all.*

Pursuit of the Real

Frederick R. Karl

MORE than any of the other art forms, the novel is expected to reflect the world around it—the way people live, the things they hope for or fear. In theory at least, poetry idealizes us, drama heroizes us, but the novel shows us as we are. This assumption goes back to Cervantes' conception of the Don and Sancho, gained momentum in eighteenth-century England, in the novels of Defoe, Fielding and Richardson, and reached full strength in the last century with Jane Austen, Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Thackeray and George Eliot.

Evidently, after the dislocations of our age, we no longer make this claim about the novel's hold on reality in the same way. The obvious question now is: what reality? Even, what is reality? Are we talking about the same thing that occupied Dickens and George Eliot, much less Cervantes and Defoe? With the nature of reality itself in question, the major novels of the twentieth century have not unusually been metaphysical, from Conrad's concern with the function of illusions to Mann's preoccupation with sickness and health. In the pursuit of the real, Conrad and Mann, together with Lawrence, Proust, Kafka, Faulkner and Joyce, have greatly extended novelistic reality and directed us to recognize the multiplicity of experience and the protean nature of life. We have come to view the world not as a stable place but as a web of overlapping illusions, as an ever-expanding function of memory, as a manifestation of irrational responses and perverse desires, and as an obstacle course in which man is forever trapped. This powerful demonstration of uncertainty and mystery has been the substance of the major writers; while the reputable minor ones —both in England and the United States—continue in the Victorian main stream and reflect a relatively stable world.

PARADOXICALLY, however, most people live as though stability were not only possible but already present. Their public lives, as well as their private (despite the high divorce rate), are based on ambitions, goals, continuity. They strive and seek; they hope to find; they build, and then settle in; they raise large families—in itself a sign of optimism and a mark of relative security. They struggle for better positions, for more money, for higher status. No matter what their private fears, their lives are founded on more than mere survival, in fact, on attainable self-gratification.

There would seem to be, then, a sharp contradiction between the way most people see themselves and the way the novel reflects life. There might even seem to be real deception, leading to the charge often found in the popular press that the novelist mirrors a world that people never made. Editorial writers and popular critics point insistently to the fact that the contents of most "important" novels are excessively violent and eccentric, hopelessly tragic and unrepresentative of a people who are forward-looking and basically optimistic. Such views lose sight of the whole tradition of American fiction, which, if nothing else, has been pessimistic, eccentric, dark and violent.

The current American novel continues this tradition, although at the same time it curiously does reflect many aspects of a real society in which people hold jobs, marry, have children and maintain their individuality. In other areas as well—in the ambivalent relationship of the American to religion, for example, and to the demands of his society—the novelist is "true" to what surrounds him. Even Faulkner's Gothic distortions occur in a recognizable world of fact. This attempt to probe everyday society, with no matter how bizarre a method, is generally more apparent in the current American novelists (Bellow, Malamud, Heller, Bourjaily, Styron, Salinger, Katherine Anne Porter, Sigal, Wallant—to mention only those who have recently published books) than it is in recent continental fiction (Beckett, Butor, Robbe-Grillet, Moravia) or even among the English (Murdoch, Golding, Greene, Durrell), with the exceptions of C. P. Snow, Alan Sillitoe and Angus Wilson.

WITH the American novelist still close to the naturalistically real, despite his preoccupation with aberrations, the metaphysical concerns of the earlier twentieth-century writers are most evident in continental fiction: in Moravia's Oblomov-like bored protagonists, in Beckett's vain pursuers of their own ragged identities, in Butor's and Robbe-Grillet's characters obsessed with fixing themselves in time and space, perhaps in Angus Wilson's view of a future society as a vast zoo. The French so-called "anti-novel" aspires not only to a rejection of the traditional novel but of traditional ways of looking at life. While its surface is almost a parody of naturalistic technique (descriptions carried out in a detail so compulsive as to approach hallucination), its total effect is virtually surrealistic: things bombard us and float in space seemingly for their own sake, without visible connection to the one who sees them or the ones affected by them. For Beckett, things—pebbles, bicycles, hats—assume more importance than people themselves. In his novels, the very quest—for what? for which answers? for what kind of salvation?—is doomed to failure; the seeker circles back to himself, and who

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is that? The contemporary continental novelist, like his predecessors, leaves daily fact behind in order to seek an ultimate reality or explore a metaphysical universe.

For the American novelist, people and their immediate lives count a great deal. Things, in fact, exist only to be put to use. They do not dominate or overpower the characters; when people are overwhelmed, it is by other people, by the huge block of society which makes them victims. Thus, for Heller, in *Catch-22*, and Malamud, in *A New Life*, man is victimized, and it remains for him to seek his salvation alone, even when personal salvation may mean a rejection of human solidarity. There is, here, almost a complete break with the social novel of the 1930s which saw in united action the way to transcend individual difficulties. Yossarian, of *Catch-22*, decides that self-preservation is more important than the insane demands of his commanding officer, although he deserts only after he is sure he has done as much as can be expected of the individual. He is a modern-day Crusoe who recognizes that the needs of the individual must, at some point, pre-empt the social need.

In *A New Life*—the title ironically recalls Dante's—Malamud's S. Levin must find a new self, at whatever cost of chaos left in his wake. In Styron's *Set This House on Fire*, Cass Kinsolving expiates his sordid past by murdering Mason Flagg whom he sees as an evil force, a social menace. In George Mandel's much neglected *The Breakwater*, Zale finds in rebellion an entire way of life, although, ironically, it also leads to his death. Bellow's Henderson, like a Lawrentian hero, tries to transcend the whole social order to resurrect his soul. With his lion in tow and the Persian-speaking child clutched to his chest, he finds an inner peace that somehow makes war, strife and ambition meaningless. In Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools*, people on the edge of a world catastrophe enjoy their food, sex and nastiness to one another—qualities that preserve them as individuals.

INVOLVED though they are with the urgency of self-preservation and the needs of the individual, there are, nevertheless, few major American novels presently concerned with ambition and the will toward power—the qualities that occupy C. P. Snow. *The Affair*, number eight in his "Strangers and Brothers" series, shows Snow still interested in careers: (say) a Royal Society membership, an important book or piece of research, an advancement in administrative power, a high post in government service, even a Nobel Prize. Snow's "reality" is that of our overt lives, whereas most of the Americans—and some of the French—are concerned with dissecting the interior life where anxieties and conflicts are more important than the individual's actual behavior. Snow wishes to show the continuing need for the old-fashioned virtues: integrity, duty, principle, ideals, although he is not priggish or self-righteous. He does feel that despite outer chaos people continue at their work; and it is to his credit that he sees work in terms of responsibility and duty, rarely simply as a means to power.

More specifically than any of his contemporaries, Snow asks what man is like in the twentieth century and how a good man can live in a world of temptations. In his intense realism of conception and execution, Snow demonstrates that man must constantly come to terms with himself in every act, and that the conscious individual is fully responsible for whatever course he does take. In brief, the faith of a moral agnostic. Future historians would have a fairly good idea of one side of a responsible twentieth-century man merely by following Snow through the labyrinths of a bureaucratic society where the individual, without visible guidance, must himself find his way or be lost. He reflects a world in which any notion of ultimate reality is unimportant; people are too busy living. It is the same view that Alan Sillitoe, employing a very different social milieu, generates in the Nottingham section of *Key to the Door*.

Angus Wilson writes in *The Old Men at the Zoo* about the administration of a zoo in terms reminiscent of Snow's descriptions of Whitehall Street. Wilson's sick elephants and butting giraffes are analogous to Snow's bureau heads and administrators, and the way the "keepers" handle each determines their own futures. Wilson has tried much more than Snow; he has attempted to place the London zoo, with all its comic implications, against the background of an atomic war. His aim evidently is to demonstrate that decisions for immediate survival must be made despite potential destruction. But as in Snow, man appears in his setting as a creature who has a duty to perform no matter what the circumstances, even the dubious job of evacuating zoo animals after an atomic attack.

FOR THE contemporary American writer, there is no such central concern with work and duty; his main characters must function in a real world of dislocation. For Heller and Bourjaily (Quincy in *Confessions of a Spent Youth*), man is at war; his "career" is simply to stay alive and allay his fears with sex and alcohol. Bellow's Henderson has already made his money and is now free to remake himself. Updike's Harry Angstrom (in *Rabbit, Run*) leaves his wife and job (as a Woolworth barker) and floats free, relatively guiltless, to try to be himself unencumbered by responsibilities or duties. Salinger's Franny and Zooey are perpetual adolescents free to contemplate Zen or anything else that catches their imagination. Even Malamud's Levin, who tries to resurrect his soul through college teaching, fails miserably and by the last chapter had drifted free of his career.

In these American novels, work has become, in fact, almost a taboo. The protagonist rarely identifies with his job, and he is antipathetic toward those who are overly committed to theirs.

Croucher

Mostly I wait in my burrow.
Sometimes when rain comes I climb out and drink it.
Sometimes I stretch to the sun till I'm ten feet high.
When the moon's strong you can dream me.
When shadows race your heart you can catch my shadow there.
Death's nothing, death's a sweet, melty woman.
I'll take her with all my fire when she calls me.

All I ask is footing.
All I ask is a surface to stand on.
Like that tough old Viking
Going into the wolf pit with his feet roped
But a sword in his hands, snarling at his captors.
Like blind Samson,

Lying in Gaza in the cool filth,
Hearing his hair grow.

Howard Ant

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Just as the steady worker sees his free-floating colleague as a potential menace, so does the floater see his plugging colleague as priggish, self-righteous, somehow dishonest and phony for pursuing goals that are ultimately meaningless. It is very important for the American writer that his protagonist be "cool" or "hip," in contradistinction (say) to the earnestness of Snow's Lewis Eliot or Wilson's Simon Carter. To be cool means that the individual first satisfies himself; that he rejects institutions, traditions and conventions; that he works out his own secular morality. He has a code, but it is unwritten, usually unspoken. It may be revealed by a gesture or by silence. He becomes the last bastion of sanity in an insane world.

This element of the American experience is engrained in the tradition. While the central character remains alienated to almost everything outside himself, his struggle is to avoid self-alienation. He must obsessively pursue his identity which, not bestowed at birth, has still to be won. That is a "real" view of society and survival, although one not involving civilian defense, unemployment, automation, the threat of communism or imminent destruction by atomic warfare. Curiously, it coincides quite closely with the views of a good part of society, which is apathetic to most outside threats except those that are immediately unavoidable.

WE MUST make a clear distinction between official pronouncements and private lives. Opinion polls repeatedly show that people are not responsive to the big ideas and the big threats to survival, but to the day-to-day menaces which somehow loom larger. It is just this world that the American novelist describes—though he works through distortions that act as a comment on the given community. Tolstoy's naturalness of content and style cannot serve writers concerned with fragmentation and instability. While Tolstoy agreed with Shakespeare that ripeness is all, the current writer does not even seek wholeness. Instead, he asks, "What is my name? How did I get it? Do I want to keep it? And what threats are constantly present to destroy it?" A man now has to prove himself, not by being accomplished or successful, but simply by being a man.

Further, although the quality of a man's life may often be empty or aimless, the possibility of resurrection (on a small scale) is almost always present. His "escape" may be a mixed blessing, but it is nevertheless an escape into an area where the self can be pursued and individuality can be reaffirmed: thus, Yossarian's desertion, Levin's flight from Cascadia College, Cass Kinsolving's murder of Mason Flagg, Quincy's attempt to efface his past in sexual adventures, the pursuit of "experience" by various Mailer protagonists, Henderson's rebirth in darkest Africa where even Kurtz would have feared to go, Rabbit Angstrom's ducking of responsibility in order to find some "true self." The point is dramatized tersely and effectively in Peter Matthiessen's *Raditzer,* wherein Charlie Stark discovers an entirely new dimension of self under the perverse influence of Raditzer. Clearly, there is no single reality, no single self, no single life.

SOME OF these views are the stock in trade not only of the American writer but of several of the French: Samuel Beckett, Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet; and a few of the English: Iris Murdoch (*A Severed Head*), William Golding (*Free Fall*), Graham Greene (*A Burnt-Out Case*). For the American writer, however, life continues to go on, while for the French it seems temporarily to have ceased. In Beckett and Robbe-Grillet, for example, the severe naturalism of style precludes continuity; by the seemingly obsessed pursuit of trivia, they suggest that the "whole"—what is it?—is unobtainable. Detail is all. Consequently, by technique itself they indicate that only a small part of life is available to the human being, and that this trivial, diminished part is all that can concern him.

For Butor — whose writings deserve far more attention than they have yet received — the present hardly counts, mixed in as it is with time passing and to come. By constantly shifting to the past as it exerts force on the present, Butor upsets all continuity. Paradoxically, he employs this flexibility to demonstrate the great flow of time and events. In his latest novel, *Degrees,* Butor suggests an infinite number of possible realities by juxtaposing different time sequences. On the surface, he charts the life in a French *lycée,* but beneath is the whole pull of history: the background of the courses, the pressure of the students' personalities, the pasts of the teachers themselves. Specifically, he asks what a school is, but the attempt to answer becomes a metaphysical quest that is doomed to failure.

The American writer moves more in space; he covers vast distances, whole

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continents, rather than periods of time. He slights history. His protagonists do not age in time so much as they suddenly become old after traveling thousands of miles. They remain, usually, young enough to take on any available female, to experience a new adventure, to pursue what they hope will be a new sensation or pleasure. Their quest is a spatial one; and it is in space, rather than time, that the American writer weaves whatever continuity he achieves.

NOT unusually, then, the American writer is less concerned with love than with lust—for love takes time, while lust takes only a place: the back seat of a car or, in an affluent society, the girl's apartment. In space, the direct approach to sex is important, while in time, a courtship is possible, even necessary. The novelist "realistically" assumes that sex will give only temporary relief, that joy or happiness is not an expectation but only a chance by-product. The protagonist can always move on. By car or airplane he can forage the country for sex, planting his seed before drifting away to harvest someone else's work. This is how our creative writers see us: as a people for whom love is almost unobtainable, for whom sexual intercourse is a form of escape or quest, and for whom there is really nothing else to do but float to the next adventure.

Such a view of love—and ultimately of life—is the somewhat limited one that the spatial novel conveys. The temporal novel, however, may create a different effect, for it is usually representative of a more established culture. It is often a love story. Moravia in *The Empty Canvas* has attempted to merge both, the boredom implicit in spatial love and the obsession that derives from temporal love. Like Goncharov's *Oblomov* and Beckett's *Murphy,* it is a novel full of malaise and world-weariness. Moravia is a Beckett of a sort who still believes that sex may lead to love, while Beckett himself continues to ask what love is and wonders if sex is worth while even if love were possible. In *The Empty Canvas,* Moravia has explored the wasteland of human impotence and returned with the dim hope that life, even one filled with despair, is preferable to death. "I [Dino] had indeed visited the dim purlieus of death, but I had returned; and now, although without hope, all that was left for me was to go on living." This resolution is not much—little more than what is left to Beckett's tramps as they wait and hope—but, curiously, it is enough to justify life. It recalls Meursault's exultation as he awaits death and the decision to survive of Sartre's narrator in *Nausea.* Despite its pessimism, this is a more formalized resolution than many American novelists can make, notwithstanding their concern with people and individuality; for with their reliance on space, they hope, often falsely, for something better in the next town, in the next girl, in the next experience. The protagonists of Moravia and Beckett have faced the malaise and somehow come through, although with small hopes and expectations for the future. The American protagonist, however, assuming immortality, runs away.

Katherine Anne Porter, for instance, in *Ship of Fools* sees society in terms of a voyage, during which every relationship is fleeting and love or friendship impossible. Everyone is on the run—the Americans as well as the Germans and Spanish—to pursue false dreams, to fulfill vain hopes, to continue to be nasty and selfish. There are, unfortunately, no alternatives. And for Clancy Sigal, in *Going Away,* movement is all, from the title itself through the last paragraph, in which the narrator leaves America for Europe. As a space novel, *Going Away* is almost a paradigm: here there are no lasting connections, everything is change (for the worse). Even the left-wing movement which had once fiercely engaged Sigal's

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Wild flowers, picked and stepped on, daisy
plucked, sense what I know. Spring's under
foot again. Last year's a mess; brown ice

cracks up. Imagining's a snap. It throws me
seasons back. First white, then black, wind's
thickening winters stick. I cannot fix one

image fast. Spring will not last. A stricter
weather brings me up. To date, no summer
breaks but fall's a sudden silence. Listen

I'm no loon but birds spring winter back. Bare
witching branches, now in bloom, stir blood
and brain. Things stay as clearly what they

seem. When sun's reborn and flowers, rain's
not; no drizzle drops; wet's nothing, but ever's
under green. I am a part of what's unseen.

Today, in fact, I jumped a decade, sitting down.
Distant, I observed at last the present past.
No, nothing lasts, I think; then drop such

thoughts, and cut home through the trees. I'm
prone to walk. Intent, absorbed, I ran right on
a spider's web. Caught up, the spider flew.

But struck, I ripped it down. The panic clings,
or clung. It was so fast. So quick (like that!)
I saw now then (ten years again) vacant, rent.

William Rivera

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narrator has gone false and sour, now a mockery of its former excitement. What, then, is left besides flight? Sigal writes:

> I see no salvation in personal relationships, in political action, or in any job I might undertake in society. Everything in me cries out that we are meaningless pieces of paste.... That man is alone and can only relieve but not redeem his loneliness. That, to the extent we try to deny this—and most things in America aim at denying this—to that extent we participate in a living lie which must corrupt if not destroy us.

Updike's Rabbit is also indicative of this need to move on in order obsessively to seek one's self, to relieve one's loneliness. The title suggests the content. Rabbit lives in space; even his years as a great basketball player denote the need to run. For basketball—the most popular of American sports—is a game of back and forth, of almost constant movement. As Rabbit runs from his wife and children, so he runs from himself: his failure to accept responsibility for them, no matter how trying they are, is his failure to accept self-responsibility. Rabbit runs, for that is the nature of a rabbit, an adequate but depressing symbol of the free-wheeling American male on the make, perhaps of the American in his national and world role.

THESE novelists—American as well as English and continental—reflect a reality that balks resolution. The pressures are too great, man's separation from others and from himself too immense, the important issues too distant. The power of the human will to overcome problems, even to create happiness—what every nineteenth-century novelist took for granted—is now in serious doubt, and only popular minor novelists like Wouk, Sloan Wilson and Ruark seriously believe in it. The major writers continue to reflect the world that Kafka caught forty years ago, in which man's unconscious fears have become more momentous than his conscious plans and hopes.

This is not to say that no alternatives exist in the contemporary novel; but where they are found they are often ambiguous or strongly qualified. Iris Murdoch, in her most recent novel, *A Severed Head,* has attempted a thorough examination of the nature of love to see if there is some reservoir in man which can be drawn upon. She is perhaps trying, not so much to define reality, as to transcend it by exploring the boundaries of freedom and restriction, particularly as they relate to the relationship between the sexes. At this point Miss Murdoch has raised the question whether a breakthrough to inner freedom—despite external chaos—can be gained in secular terms, or whether it is possible solely in a religious quest.

This position seems also to be William Golding's in *Free Fall.* His Sammy Mountjoy has chosen the way of self-gain and in so doing lost his freedom; here is a complete turnabout on the notion of freedom implicit in a capitalistic society. Sammy finds that he must face the destructiveness of his will and accept responsibility for having driven Beatrice mad. How much this new attitude affects Sammy we do not know; we do realize, however, that the drive of his will to destroy others has been momentarily blocked and that even if he does not feel cosmic guilt, he perceives the nature of his transgression. In self-recognition begins his salvation.

THE tensions and conflicts that contemporary novelists reflect may often seem radically different from our own personal ones, but like their major predecessors, these writers are concerned with the timeless questions of guilt, conscience, responsibility and, ultimately, man's essence. The most impressive of the current novelists seem to indicate that the cultivation of self-responsibility—with or without a sense of guilt—is one's only hope in a world that has veered out of control. Without injuring others and without prostituting some dim ideal of behavior, one is obligated to save oneself rather than probe a meaningless fate; and this "solution," depressing though it is, is generally acceptable to the American and English writer, as well as to his more despairing continental coevals. By some ironic twist, the novel which began with Defoe's fierce sense of human individuality has come down to us, almost 350 years later, with its stress upon the individual as the sole hope in a dislocated age. As such, despite its vast changes, the novel mirrors the way people live and feel, no matter how they may publicly argue differently. Man may not be important enough to be tragic, but in the long run he and his inner life are the only things that count. On this point, even the most despairing of writers seem to agree.

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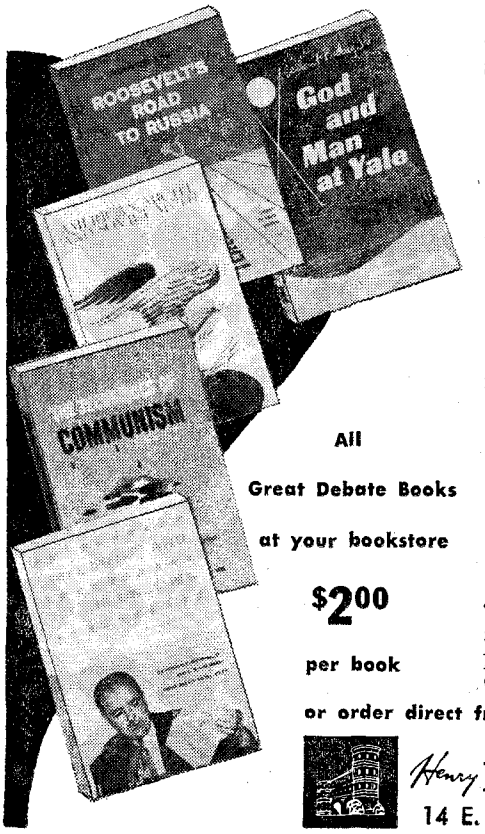

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Search for Conflict

Tom F. Driver

THE YEARS of the cold war and the bomb are not healthy years for the art of drama. The cold war is stalemate and the bomb spreads fear. Both contribute to a paralysis of the will, which is a condition very undramatic. In these times the dramatic imagination flourishes neither in writers nor in their audiences.

The bomb and the cold war are not the ultimate causes of the paralysis of the will. They merely dramatize, far more powerfully than any dramatist can, the cultural malaise of the age. The fear that is deeper than the fear of the bomb is the fear that life itself is meaningless or absurd. The bomb ratifies such fear.

The stalemate that is more profound than the cold war is the split in Western consciousness itself between knowledge and imagination, a split that casts doubt upon the validity of any act of courage. The cold war objectifies the stalemate we have reached within ourselves.

In such a situation traditional forms of drama cannot flourish. Hence, the most vigorous dramatists, searching for new forms, have invented the so-called *avant-garde* theatre. Yet even those of us who are enthusiastic about such theatre must ask whether it will prove in the end an adequate expression of the dramatic imagination.

People today find that neither themselves nor anything that they value highly can be represented in theatrical form. One indication of the truth of this statement is that the American theatre and its audience are losing sight of what a genuinely theatrical experience is — genuine, that is, as over against experiences provided by other forms of art and entertainment. The result is a confusion of genres.

ON Broadway at present one out of three productions is an adaptation of material from novels, biographies, films or television. One of the successful adaptations, from a theatrical point of view, is *My Fair Lady*, which has the advantage of coming from a play by Shaw. Only one other (*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) may be said to have achieved in the process of adaptation something sufficiently theatrical to justify its existence. The rest, including *A Passage to India* and *The Aspern Papers*, are simply getting by.

Confusion of genres occurs not only in the case of adaptations. Its worst effects are to be seen in the influence that novelistic and film techniques have upon writing done expressly for the stage. If we ask how many current Broadway productions are of such a nature that they could not be presented equally well, or perhaps better, in one of the other media, the answer is one out of four. In other words, 75 per cent of Broadway fare is not inherently theatrical.

Off-Broadway, the situation is considerably better. Unfortunately, audiences and producers do not look to off-Broadway for their standards of what theatricality should be. Acting and directing off-Broadway are usually not at a level high enough to realize the theatrical potential of the scripts. This makes Broadway *appear* to be more theatrical, but in fact it is less so.

Confusion of genres would not occur in the theatre if the culture found that its dilemmas and its self-understanding could be adequately mirrored in dramatic form, for then the genuinely dramatic would drive out the spurious. Drama requires for its fulfillment a high degree of social cohesion. It wants a broad base of allegiance to common myths, symbols and values. It is very difficult for a dramatist to instill these into an audience that does not have them, while at the same time subjecting them to criticism. Yet only the latter function is truly dramatic.

Drama is based upon conflict, and the conflict cannot be of more than surface excitement unless it is fundamentally a conflict between certainty and doubt. But for us, all myths are broken before we go to the theatre, all symbols rationalized from translucence into transparency, all values already in doubt.

This situation makes the drama appear an old-fashioned, if not a reactionary, form of art. It seems to belong to an age of belief and class structure that is gone. Ibsen appears either to have dealt the death blow or to have been fortunate enough to live in a time when his blows made the last resounding noise. Thus O'Neill complained about "the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to find a satisfactory new one," and set himself the task of putting up new gods so that he could knock them down. Recently *J.B.* and *Gideon* have gone in for that kind of shadow-boxing — only they set up an old God and knocked Him down. In the twentieth century the drama has turned Marxist or Freudian or metaphysical or religious in order to find the "reality" its audience no longer knows.

SINCE drama has therefore come to seem a synthetic form of art, our best writers, especially in America, have not written much for the stage. America has never had a playwright who could be said to rank with her best novelists and poets in disciplined intellect and imagination. Who would prefer to be instructed in the life of the mind by Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Arthur Miller or Tennessee Williams, rather than by Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Henry James, William Faulkner, Robert Frost, Conrad Aiken or Wallace Stevens? Who would not rather be the author of *The Sound and the Fury* than *A Streetcar Named Desire*? Of *Sunday*

TOM F. DRIVER is a member of the faculty of Union Theological Seminary and drama critic of The Christian Century. *He is the author of* The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama *(Columbia University Press).*

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Morning rather than *Death of a Salesman*?

In Europe the exodus of intellect from playwriting has not been nearly so complete. Brecht and Pirandello may be cited as men who could think and who had theatrical imaginations to match their thoughts. One remembers also Sartre, Eliot and Camus, though of these only Sartre is at his best when writing for the theatre.

THE dramatist of today has to go against the stream. Two streams in fact. Like all his great predecessors in playwriting, and like almost all artists of any genre, he has to challenge the received opinions of his society. Today he has also to challenge the latent assumption of his audience that drama is neither a reliable nor a pertinent form of literature: not reliable because it is too symbolic, and not pertinent because it speaks of action when there is no action. Dramatists, who ought to be the most aggressive of writers, are thrown on the defensive. They know they are outside the battle, and they try desperately to become more relevant.

The bulk of twentieth-century drama has tried to get into the swim by taking over various ideas current in the market place. Eager to be thought relevant, the playwrights have gone with the stream instead of against it. Forgetting the wisdom of pioneers like Ibsen and Shaw, they have curried favor with the audience by affirming what the audience already thinks. They could hardly have made a more serious mistake. What do we learn from *A Raisin in the Sun* or *Sunrise at Campobello* except that the "liberal" notions we hold are indeed correct and look very good as dressed-up soap opera?

It is fairly easy to pigeonhole the ideologies of the plays that come up for inspection season after season. The most damage has been done by the Freudian or pseudo-Freudian drama, which in recent years has accounted for the vast majority of straight plays in the American theatre. It has produced, not a body of genuinely psychological drama, but a plague of psychologistic drama. Such plays are more concerned with fashionable techniques than with discovery of significant truth.

O'Neill bent over backwards to say that he did not get his ideas from Freud, but if they did not come first-hand they came second- or third-hand. As our knowledge of Freud and post-Freudian psychology grows, the psychologism of *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Strange Interlude* becomes more and more apparent and less and less compelling.

Until the death of Robert Anderson, he and Arthur Laurents and William Inge formed a triumvirate who ruled by their eminence over the American psychologistic drama. Anderson died young and Laurents seems to be turning his energies toward the musical stage, but Inge goes on apace, followed by a lengthy train of lesser writers who preach the therapeutic gospel of family love, acceptance and sexual maturity. Inge has great skill as an observer of certain details in American life and as a fashioner of scenes and plots. But as an interpreter of existence, or as a dramatist who might upset some of our clichés, he is not worth consideration.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS is often mentioned along with Inge as a psychologistic writer, but Williams' virtues and errors, whatever they are, are not those of Inge and the other writers of psychologism. The basic difference is easy to spot. The focus of the Inge play is upon the psychology of the characters in the play. The focus of the Williams play is upon the psychology of the playwright and the audience. Hence, Williams' characters are more universal than those of Inge. We are not interested in them because of what we learn about their problems, but because of the things they represent that dwell within us.

Moreover, it is not our psychology as such that interests Williams, nor is it his psychology as that of an individual that interests us. Rather, it is what can be drawn from the unconscious life to be used as a kind of mythological material for an interpretation of existence. We cannot begin to understand *A Streetcar Named Desire, Orpheus Descending* or *Sweet Bird of Youth* unless we know something about sado-masochism. But we cannot fully understand those plays unless we perceive that the psychology of sado-masochism is being used to describe Williams' view of man's relationship to the universe. He creates a complete world, and in it there are two overriding forces: the will to violence and the will to suffer. That may or may not be a true picture of reality, but we cannot shrug it off as Marya Mannes and others have wanted to do — it coincides with the testimony of too many sane men since the rise of Manicheism, if not before. Williams is America's foremost religious dramatist, not because he sometimes mentions God in his plays, but because all his realism is shot through with a yearning for

Turkey Buzzard

Dozing on a rotten branch,
his big claws holding on
like screws,
the turkey buzzard huddles;
his body
in the present-tense.
He is
floating on the wind again;
letting it carry him—
a promise
to meet the kill.
His eyes,
unplumbed; the past-tense,
eating,
filling.
If we were to disbelieve
the lagging in his wingbones
as the wind
reasons with the members,
pulls each feather
to relax—
oh, slavery,
we would feel the very hand
pull us down
in midflight.
We too
would miss
our kill.

Diane Wakoski

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spiritual vision. This quality is noticeably present in *The Night of the Iguana,* but it has been there from the start. In Williams we have not psychologism, certainly not sociology, but a mythology of existence. He is an intuitive writer.

Williams shows clearly the strength to be gained from avoiding or transcending popular ideas. He also shows that a dramatist is better off if he does not begin his work with too many well-thought-out theories. Such an approach distinguishes him from Arthur Miller, to whom he is superior as a dramatist in spite of Miller's having the more disciplined craft and intellect. Miller has great social consciousness and many good ideas about how the drama should go beyond realism toward a moral interpretation of existence. Yet with Miller one feels that the preconceived moral conflicts have either not come into focus, as in *Death of a Salesman,* or that they have achieved focus at the expense of profundity, as in *All My Sons, The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge.*

FOR comment on the social situation one nowadays looks mostly to England. That is because the English stage has only recently discovered the lower classes. The Continental theatre made that discovery before the turn of the century, the Irish in the first decade after, and the Americans following the First World War. Perhaps the English came late so that the stage might not forget that it has social causes to champion. Or perhaps in order to give Mr. Kenneth Tynan something to fight for. In any case, Arnold Wesker, John Osborne, Shelagh Delaney and several others have cast aside the genteel tradition in British drama and have brought to the stage, on occasion, an earthy realism and a passion for social change. This alone, however, will not suffice. Art is not justified by the justice of the causes it supports.

The major artistic benefit so far produced by the young British playwrights of social conscience is the rhetoric of John Osborne. He ranks with Tennessee Williams and Jean Genet as one of the best writers of long dramatic speeches in the recent theatre. That virtue is more important than it may seem, for in it the writer has available to him the means to express not only character and situation but also those ranges of human thought that can be explored only where language has the freedom to soar. Osborne has made good use of it in *Luther,* where he is able to show, in a way appropriate to the twentieth century, as well as the sixteenth, the ironic contrast between Luther the man of magnificent words and Luther the man of faltering and disastrous action. *Luther* and *Look Back in Anger* have this in common: they show the violent storms that rage in rebellious men who are dissatisfied with the *status quo,* and they show the ambiguity and futility of these storms as far as public history is concerned. In this respect Osborne mirrors, as do most other contemporary dramatists, the crisis in action that besets our culture.

THE WORK of the so-called *avant-garde* playwrights must be seen in relation to that crisis in action. Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Michel de Ghelderode, Harold Pinter and the others have observed the crisis and have, in their several ways, written directly about it. That is why their work is superior to

The Train of the Wounded

(from the Spanish of Miguel Hernandez)

Silence that founders on the silence
of those mouths closed by night.
It stays silent, even when crossed.
It speaks the drowned speech of the dead.

Silence.

Open up highways of deep cotton,
gag the wheels, the clocks,
hold back the sea's voice, the dove's:
touch the feelings of the night of dreams.

Silence.

The train, rainy with flying blood,
the fragile train of those who bleed,
the silent, painful, pale,
gagged train of sufferings.

Silence.

Train of the mortal paleness that rises:
paleness covers heads,
the *Ay!* covers the voice, the heart, the earth,
the heart of those who were badly hurt.

Silence.

They are dumping legs, arms, eyes,
dumping out parts all through the train.
They pass, leaving a trail of bitterness,
another milky way of limbs like stars.

Silence.

Hoarse train, passed out, reddened with blood:
the coal is in its death throes, smoke sighs,
and the engine sighs like a mother,
advances like a long discouragement.

Silence.

The long mother is dying to stop
under a tunnel and stretch out to sob.
There are no stops for it except
the hospital, except the breast.

In order to live, one portion is enough:
a man can fit in a corner of the flesh.
A single finger, a single piece of wing
can start the body on its total flight.

Silence.

Stop that dying train whose road
across the night never comes to an end.
Even the horse has been deprived of shoes
and sand gets into its hooves and its breath.

Hurdie St. Martin

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the plays of many writers who merely reflect the crisis without realizing that they are doing so.

Beckett says that if you look about you today you see nothing that corresponds to action. Contemporary experience affords no basis for an action that would be, in Aristotle's words, "serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude." There is only "the mess," for the representation of which drama must find new forms. Ionesco and Ghelderode both have spoken of their indebtedness to modern painting, from which Ionesco develops the conception of a "pure theatre." What he means is a theatre that does not imitate action but instead is a fusion of images, gestures, situations and dreams. All the *avant-garde* are dissatisfied with what Ionesco calls "the non-metaphysical world of today." They try to reveal it for what it is and to communicate, by indirect means, an awareness of the dimension that has been lost to contemporary experience.

THE *avant-garde* is the healthiest movement to have emerged in the theatre since the Second World War. The popular notions that it is nihilistic and that it describes the impossibility of communication are completely mistaken. On the contrary, it is a highly sophisticated strategy for the achievement of communication. Its strengths are several and should be enumerated:

First, it has understood that the theatre declines when it is used to reinforce current ideas and to advocate known doctrines of politics, psychology, religion, and so forth. The power of the *avant-garde*, over and above whatever is due to the technical skill of its best writers, is the power to attack, or at least to put in jeopardy, even those residual assurances that are left to modern man. It is theatre of magic and perhaps demonry. It is in no way domesticated, not even in Ionesco, whose settings so often are family living rooms.

Second, the *avant-garde* playwrights have seen that the popular theatre has exhausted its forms and that only very radical innovations will save it. When Beckett wrote *Waiting for Godot*, he knew its potential to rejuvenate the theatre, but he did not really expect that anyone would publish or produce it. Its great success everywhere but in New York, where it has been ludicrously mishandled, is proof that at the present time playwrights can do most for the theatre by attending strictly to the demands of their subjects, forgetting absolutely the box office.

Third, the *avant-garde* has seen that the theatre cannot speak relevantly to a modern audience without acknowledging the mistrust of action that the audience actually has. They have been bold in attempting to create a kind of theatre that could exist without action — or at least without the rational progress of ideas and events, which is what action has traditionally meant in the theatre. Lionel Abel has given to what they have achieved the name anti-play. That is, a play whose very point is the absence of action. Those who invented the anti-play showed that they understood the contemporary mind profoundly.

Fourth, the *avant-garde* has emphasized with admirable gusto the element of theatricality that is present in all drama but gets lost to public view when drama becomes overly literary and serious. Plays like *The Bald Soprano, Endgame, The Caretaker* and *Pantagleize* are jests of highly playful content that can be realized nowhere but in a theatre. In them, as in Jack Gelber's *The Apple*, there is a lot of vaudeville. The use of such popular forms of theatrical entertainment is indispensable to the future growth of dramatic art.

Finally, the *avant-garde* understands that no important theatre can exist without metaphysical overtones. That is not to say that the playwrights themselves are metaphysicians (it is good they are not) or that they even read much philosophy. However, their writing has been correctly called "metaphysical," and this is not, as some who use the term think, a pejorative label. The conventional theatre has gone dead for lack of the richness that metaphysical speculation provides.

ALONG with the virtues of the *avant-garde*, certain weaknesses must be mentioned. There is really only one, though it may help to mention two aspects of it.

The anti-play is too negative to become the foundation of a body of lasting work in the theatre. I do not refer here to the content of the plays, but only to their form. The anti-play is dependent on the writer's and the audience's knowledge of the play proper. The form is arresting, in many cases, because it is *not* what we are conditioned to expect. This effect is initially powerful, but quickly depreciates. Moreover, we already have many examples of faltering work by persons who try to write the anti-play without knowledge of how to write the play of action. I fear that Edward Albee's over-praised

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The American Dream is one such. Like all negativities, the anti-play is parasite to the positive, and a return to the imitation of action itself will one day be necessary.

The second aspect of the limitation of the *avant-garde* movement is that it solves the problem of contemporary drama by evading it. To acknowledge the audience's suspicion of action by writing non-action is good as far as it goes, but it does not of itself contribute much to the rebirth of action. If the age is suspicious of action, and if it was necessary for playwrights to make this clear, nevertheless the age is also hungry for a genuine manifestation of action. The critical and popular success of *A Man for All Seasons* is surely evidence for this fact. The *avant-garde* theatre has made us acutely aware of our hunger for action, and that is its historical function, but by itself it can do no more than point urgently to something outside its own field of competence. Such theatre is to the theatre of the future as Hamlet was to the players: its passions are great, its skill very moving, and we could not have done without it, but like Hamlet, the theatre is afraid it may "lose the name of action."

If the theatre is to have a future, the metaphysical imagination, which has been spurred by the *avant-garde*, will play a great part in it. But also a kind of humanism will have to return, so that we feel once more that we are dealing with men as well as with forces and essences.

The theatre can rise to significance again only if both its playwrights and its audiences will not flinch from the task of seeing what it takes to be human in these inhuman times.

The American Finds His Country

Hilton Kramer

"Let us look at this American artist first. . . . Why isn't he a European still, like his father before him?"

—D. H. Lawrence.

THE history of American painting in the twentieth century is a history of ambiguities, and at the heart of these ambiguities is the figure of the *pure American* as he was defined by Henry James when, in 1872, in a review of the European notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne, he remarked of his precursor: "We seem to see him strolling through churches and galleries as the last pure American — attesting by his shy responses to dark canvas and cold marble his loyalty to a simpler and less encumbered civilization." It was a shrewd observation, made by a writer who himself lacked anything but shyness in the presence of art, the writer who probably more than anyone else bequeathed to the American artist of the twentieth century that total commitment to art which has been his most marked characteristic and often his only solace. This figure of the *pure American*, with his shy response to artistic culture in the European sense, came over into the twentieth century somewhat changed, of course. He went underground. "Modern Art" was European art; the very conception of a modern American art implied a trans-Atlantic dialogue in which the aspiration for an expression purely American was continuously announced and just as often defeated. Nevertheless, the *pure-American* element persisted. It was constantly invoked against the claims of European art, and very often submitted in the end to that peculiar synthesis of European and American elements that often characterizes our best achievements in the arts. Yet such a synthesis failed to satisfy the ideal of an art without foreign contingencies, and in the foreground of our national aesthetic consciousness there still remained the inviolate dream of a *pure-American* style that would somehow serve as a symbolic equivalent for that "simpler and less encumbered civilization" which had now been lost forever.

THE American art of our century has suffered two definitive crises in the search for that style. Both generated a new impulse in our art, and both were reflections of painful historical moments. Moreover, they both came directly from Europe. The first was the Armory Show of 1913; the second, the emigration during the Second World War of the leaders of the European *avant-garde* (Léger, Miró, Breton, Lipchitz, Mondrian and others). In the history of American art, these events form the historical parentheses of our first modern period, marking it off from what came before

HILTON KRAMER, formerly editor of Arts *magazine, has just returned from three months in Europe. He has written most recently an introduction to the painting of Milton Avery for a collection of that artist's work being published by Yoseloff; and is now at work on a study of twentieth-century painting and sculpture to be brought out by Doubleday-Anchor.*

Standards

Nothing will do but
I must get a new flag,
I've buried enough under this one,

And then there are my
Followers, mad for a bit of color,
Damn them,

And the end I suppose is not yet,
The way the trees come beating
Their horses, and the wheat is camped
Under its dead crow,
The rivers under themselves. And I'm not ready
To just sit down and let the horizon
Ride over me.

Maybe I thought
I could go on and on flying the same rag,
Like the fire,
But it's faded white and I'm
Not the fire, I'll have to find
Something bright and simple to signify
Me, what an order.

What an order but I'll have to do something.
Up until now the pulse
Of a stone was my flag
And the stone's in pieces.

W. S. Merwin

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and what followed. They were New York events. In the latter case, the political debacle of Europe removed the center of artistic gravity from Paris to New York; in the former, the sheer documentation of the European achievement was itself sufficient to cause a radical change.

The two events differed profoundly, however. The Armory Show of 1913 came at the beginning of a period, the emigration at the end of one. In both instances there was an effort to introduce into America the most vital impulses of the European *avant-garde,* but in the interim the *avant-garde* itself had been radically altered — if, indeed, it could any longer be said to exist in the old sense. In 1913 it was at the height of its powers; as communicated in the Armory Show, its effect was to shatter our assumptions about the nature of art and to stimulate again, with even greater self-consciousness, what had always been a principal anxiety in American art life: the assimilation of European achievements. The second crisis was entirely different. By the end of the thirties — and indeed, long before that — the Parisian *avant-garde* was fragmented and without a definitive direction. It had lost its inner conviction as an *avant-garde.* When political events forced its removal to New York, its validity had already been called into question. Modern art in Paris had become what it had always been in America: a personal predicament. One is tempted to observe that New York was the perfect burial place for a shattered and demoralized *avant-garde.* The equation of history and geography had a frightening appropriateness.

FOR the Americans, the art that came out of the Second World War and immediately after, was still an art of dialogue with the School of Paris. The principal formal capital was still provided by Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Klee, Kandinsky and Mondrian — above all, by Picasso — even though it was a capital spent drastically, rebelliously and utterly without regard for perpetuating the premises of its own existence. The recklessness of the spending was motivated perhaps by a desire on the part of these Americans to see what minimal aesthetic viability would remain once all this inherited capital had been spent. Their effort was all toward an undoing of European art, and therefore an undoing of their own premises. It became more and more an art constructed out of the ruins of the School of Paris. The irony is that so much that is now taken for vitality, new growth, and so on, was in reality an act of burial.

The ghost of Henry James's *pure American,* then, with his affinities for a "simpler and less encumbered civilization," was burying the European *avant-garde.* The nature of his ambiguous achievement reminds me of a judgment that R. P. Blackmur once made on the style of American ballet:

> We Americans have the technique to bring something to performance so well that the subject is left out. There is nothing we throw away so quickly as our *données*; for we would make always an independent and evangelical, rather than a contingent, creation. This is why other people in the world in part take us up and in part repudiate us; and it is why they find us both abstract and hysterical: we throw away so much and make so much of the meagre remainder. We make a great beauty, which is devastated of everything but form and gait.

It was in precisely such a devastation that the "New York School" was born.

IF ONE can speak of a New York School today, however, one means something else, for the compulsions that motivated the Abstract Expressionism of the forties and fifties already have the look of history. We now face a situation in which the variety of living artistic statement in New York will no longer submit to an easy, unified characterization. Artists in New York share a tone, a spirit, an atmosphere, a place, but those who look to the future rather than the past no longer seem intent upon proving themselves in the face of a dead *avant-garde.* They confront the culture of New York,

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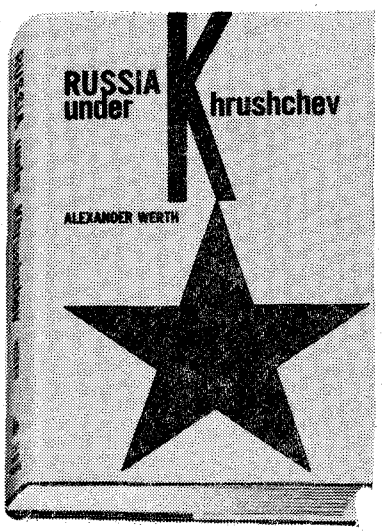

By Alexander Werth

Author of MOSCOW WAR DIARY, THE DEGAULLE REVOLUTION, Etc.

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with all its inhuman proportions and its raw taste, and they do so for the first time without the advantage of a European ideal to guide them. That is their historical uniqueness, and it is that which separates them from the artists who began doing their serious work fifteen or twenty years ago.

It is the habit of certain critics of the older generation to regard this variety of artistic statement — this effort on the part of artists to re-examine all the possibilities their elders closed the door on a generation ago — as a failure of nerve. They cannot themselves conceive of art except as a death struggle with the phantoms of the old *avant-garde*. Their inability to sympathize with a generation that no longer regards such a struggle as central to the artistic enterprise marks them, too, as being slightly historical.

THERE can be no question, of course, that the end of the European *avant-garde* was a critical loss for the American sensibility. Its energies and its ideals had always been a cushion against the raw experience of American life. This has been particularly true for the artist in New York, for nowhere else does this rawness impose itself so drastically on the artist's sensibility. The rhythm of life in New York is a destructive rhythm; the measure of human emotion counts for nothing. It is no wonder that Sartre, on his first visit to New York after the war, could ask: "Is it a city I am lost in, or is it Nature?" — so little did it seem to accommodate the human equation.

A European city is a repository of the past; at every turn one is reminded of an affinity with a history that still counts, that remains the irreducible *donnée* of the present. In America, as Mr. Blackmur remarks, the *donnée* is abandoned as so much baggage. The present is not felt to be contingent on the past; it exists as a pure, abstract possibility. In Europe it required a war to destroy a city, but New York destroys itself every day as an expression of its own prosperity.

What the artist in New York faces for the first time now is the necessity of confronting this experience, of actually *seeing* it, without the ghost of the dead *avant-garde* guiding his hand. Many artists today find themselves in a position that is roughly analogous to that of political radicals. For them those large, beautiful, all-embracing European systems of thought and feeling are simply not *there* any more. They do not account for enough of the particularity

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and complexity of American experience. Their categories seem not to be able to accommodate the shape of life as it is actually lived. And just as many radicals have had to abandon traditional Socialist ideology in order to reconstruct their radical stance from more empirical materials, so also I think many artists who a generation back would have been content to form themselves in the *avant-garde* mold, now find it impossible to think of their work in those terms.

But just as we have a false radicalism that still clings to the old concepts in the face of all the contradictions of experience, so we also have a false *avant-garde* that perpetuates the myth of aesthetic intransigence while enjoying the rewards of aesthetic conformity. And basic to this myth is the old notion of the *pure American* confronting European culture. A great deal that passes for *avant-garde* expression in New York makes its appeal directly to our yearning for a "simpler and less encumbered civilization"; it transforms our difficult, urban experience into a kind of pastoral, acting as if the culture of Times Square and Madison Avenue were somehow a reincarnation of the frontier. It is, of course, a gross form of sentimentality masking itself as audacity.

It is this idea of the *pure American* that must be exorcised from the art of the sixties if it is really to tell us the truth about our experience. To cling to it now is to see American experience through European eyes. A few years ago Lionel Abel wrote that "Most Europeans believe that their culture is dead. . . . Any doctrine which presents a plan for a new beginning, for initiating a movement forward, is bound to find sympathy among people who feel that their inherited stock of ideas and attitudes is no longer fecund." And clearly the notion of America as a "simpler and less encumbered civilization" — not the real America, of course, but America as it is represented by our art — does constitute a "new beginning" for many Europeans. It is consumed as part of the world-wide cult of America that has no interest in making distinctions between what is best and what is worst, between what is living and what is the enemy of life, in our culture.

One does well to recall that James spoke of Hawthorne as the "*last* pure American," for even in James's day it was difficult to go on believing in so mythical a figure and in our own it has become ludicrous. The idea dies hard because it has had, like the convention of the European *avant-garde*, the comforting effect of disguising and softening our experience. Without it we are naked in the face of events. But it is precisely in that nakedness that one looks for the authentic art of the moment.

The International Word

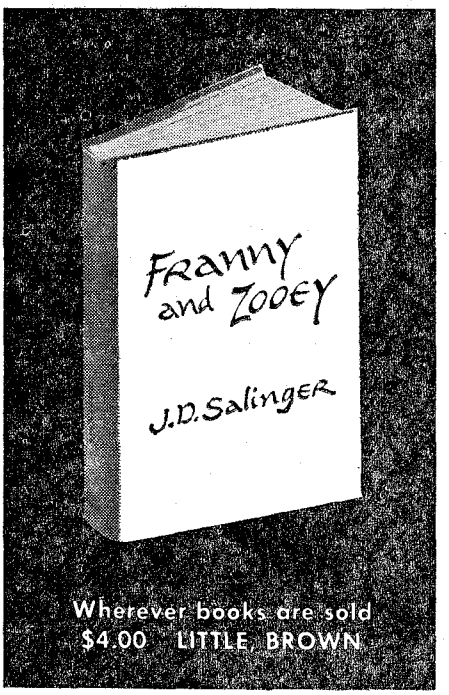
Paul Blackburn

Flame burns, rain sinks into the cracks
And they all go to rack ruin beneath the thud of the years.
Stands genius a deathless ornament,
a name not to be worn out with the years.
—Ezra Pound, Homage to Sextus Propertius (1917)

I HAD NOT wanted to start with genius. Perhaps it's as well, though, to start with that quotation. Pound, Yeats and Dr. Williams, one way or another, are at the bottom of where we have got to today in matters of technique and aesthetic; they were, and are, indicators of the range of materials, both for their contemporaries and for later students and practitioners of the craft. This is not to deny others their influence and innovations, but that these three men are prime, germinal, seems to me to be saying a true thing. The above epigraph is also a translation, and Pound, in another line down through the years, has insisted on the values of bringing across other sensibilities in other languages and from all periods of history and civilization. The current flood of translations in both prose and poetry indicates, not that we are consciously following that insistence of forty years, but that one man's preoccupation has grown into a climate of opinion and now expresses a real need. Now that colonialism has become an anachronism politically, as has the whole of the Iberian Peninsula, for example, it is as though we are witnessing the sack of world literature, or at least the beginning of the process, by the American publishing business. Perhaps we feel we need to know it all, have it all here to understand and love, before some jumpy lieutenant colonel pushes the button, putting planes with atomic bombs on runways all over the world, ready to protect America from foreign ideologies. The Birchites might relax with a good book, if we would only teach them how to read. But perhaps their children will learn if they prove lucky enough to grow up.

Luckily, the literary-import business is one that does not cost anyone very much, is not essential to any country's economy as, say, Angolan coffee and diamonds are to Portugal, or as Algerian oil fields in the Sahara were to France, and is a trade that will pay its dividends over the next forty years in a greater

PAUL BLACKBURN, the present poetry editor of The Nation, *is himself a poet, translator and editor. His most recent collection of verse is* The Nets *(Trobar Books).*



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breadth of understanding for other peoples, a greater tolerance for and proficiency in other languages, combined with political wisdom and expediency over the next two generations. In fact, with a tenth or two-tenths of a micromicrocurie rise per year in the Strontium-90 level in the bone marrow of our children (in adult bone the radiation content is independent of age, in children it varies inversely with age, the 1958 level for adults in the Northern Hemisphere being about 0.2 micromicrocuries, and that for one-year-olds 2.1), by the time we produce a generation whose bones are soft with radiation, we might well be the most cultured and well-read people on earth. Imagine the poetries we might be able to produce with all our free time, since we won't be able to move around very well anyway.

BUT to return to the serious matter of literary trends, the translation business is a reciprocal trade for America, at least with Western Europe since the end of World War II. Many novels (including most translations) are published simultaneously in America and England, and some books are issued simultaneously in five different countries. The bookstands of France and Germany, at least, are loaded with translated American novels, and on both sides of the Atlantic, bookshops are increasingly filling up with poetry translations. This is true at least in large cities and university and college towns. Some people in Doncaster or Treignac or Chagrin Falls, or even in such residential sections of New York as East Harlem, are not going to believe me, but the mutual insemination of cultures is an important step toward what our policy makers think of as international understanding. Perhaps even nationalism, so living a force today in Africa and the Far East, is beginning to die a little in the affluent West. Except for the political forms, Western Europe is on the threshold of becoming an economic unity. Is it an impossible dream to think of a bilingual America stretching from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic Ocean, comprised of eighty-three states instead of fifty? Not by conquest but by union. How move more efficiently to raise the standard of living of underdeveloped countries in our own hemisphere than by removing the borders? What the Alliance for Progress, the Organization of American States and the new, still small Latin American Free Trade Association are beginning to accomplish today, may they not prove the basis for a gradualized Plan for Union tomorrow? The ducts of free exchange are already open in literature. The Centro Mexicano de Escritores not only commissions but peddles translations of Mexican writers, and invites an American poet or two down every year to spend time with his Mexican confreres. What is happening when Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti are invited to address a writers' conference in Santiago, Chile? Or when Octavio Paz, the great Mexican poet and a functionary in the Mexican Embassy in Paris, reads at the YMHA Poetry Center in New York (which now, under a Bollingen grant, is conducting a translation project from some dozen languages)? *Evergreen Review* and the *Texas Quarterly* have both published Mexican numbers, and *New World Writing* (No. 14) a Latin American number. A major publishing company (Doubleday) has instituted an inter-American paperback line, the same books being published in Spanish and in English. Even individual efforts count for something, if they manage to achieve a continuity of publication: I am thinking of Robert Bly's insistence on the seminal value of translation in *The Sixties* (formerly *The Fifties*), even though the quality of the translations is uneven; and the new bilingual *The Plumed Horn* (*la primera revista bitnik,* someone called it) out of a bilingual marriage in Mexico City, though again the quality is not constant. Lysander Kemp, sitting down by himself in Guadalajara, is a one-man factory of translations of incredible beauty. The sole literary magazine in Guatemala is, I believe, backed by USIA funds. So it is taking place on all levels.

THIS mutual enriching has been going on with individuals for a long time. Whitman's beard can be seen certainly behind Pablo Neruda's *Residencia en la Tierra* and behind some of the later work of Federico Garcia Lorca. Octavio Paz's imagery, though rooted in the Mexican passion for death and in that country's parched earth, carries inevitable overtones of Eliot's sternness, as Eliot himself was influenced by Laforgue. Now with the improvement of communications, even beatnik influences are turning up in such unlikely places as London and Tokyo, though underground, of course. The emphasis today in much of the best work seems to circle about the crisis of identity of the individual in a world whose underlying realities are the cold war and the bomb. Those poets who do not engage the military stance and the profit motive head on, are at

When Once She Smiles

i

I hate you merely for the thing you are,
for essence, as opposed to means and ends.
Since we have her in common, on a par,
we are in principle foes, in function friends.
The hunchback and the athlete lie together,
like lamb and lion, loving in the storm.
In this case she provides the pandar weather,
so come and cuddle up; *my hunch* is warm.
Ah, if virago Winter could continue
our cave might stay as cozy as it should.
But I have pride, and you have glands within you.
One smile of Spring—and farewell brotherhood!
Thus love that brings two leaping to be one
forever leaves two other loves undone.

ii

Her love for me, my love for you, will vanish
as glaciers do when gravely they descend,
and icy Latin melts to liquid Spanish,
and common source flows off to private end,
as waxen visage of a catholic order
erupts in pimples of a renaissance,
and fugitives leak through the Berlin border
to freedom (honi soit qui mal y pense),
so will our Trinity, now fixed in truce,
burn, twirl, blur, fizzle, spend itself in faction,
when once she smiles, and you spring to her, loose,
and I watch Being fertilized by Action—
huddled and hurt, sensuous from afar,
and envy what you do, hate what you are.

Judson Jerome

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least worried about the quality of their disaffection. This reaction can vary from:

> Trenglooor muryurrr dyuumm
> remglmmm myoor digrrym
> gmumyooorrmmmmmm gfumm
> zahum jahum drrumm
>
> Yehoooomm!

a happily short piece entitled "The blue moor" by Pete Brown, a British *avant-gardist,* which sounds like a pretty complete withdrawal to me; to the very explicit poem called "Now France" by Harold Norse, one of our expatriates:

> . . . . But how to slow down — I'm running away —
> are those my arteries or steel tracks? . . .
> . . . . I can't blow the "Socialist Victory"
> Nor raise any flag but my lilywhite ass
> To all the silly nations who want me to choose sides!
> I've chosen: orgasm/feeling/smell/soul!

Direct political engagement on the individual anarchist level can be seen in many of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poems, such as his *Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower;* or *Special Clearance Sale of Famous Masterpieces;* or *One Thousand Fearful Words for Fidel Castro.* Others in the Americas who have been at it for years, having a longer tradition in this line, would include Chile's Neruda, Cuba's Nicolás Guillén and the Nicaraguan Ernesto Mejía Sánchez. The North American 1930s school of social consciousness seems to have produced no followers, due to the war, but has left a faint aroma of naïveté and a few survivors.

THE COLD WAR and the possibly imminent illumination of the world have created another reaction in poets which, for being a more quiet celebration, seems to be growing stronger unnoticed. There is an affirmation, a reaffirmation, of values, a searching of the older cultures, both American and foreign, modern and ancient, for values to sustain the individual in a world where all the official values have let us down entirely by being in the main hypocritical (consider the phrase "business ethics" for a moment), the religions attenuated to the point where even the monks are screaming from the pinch. Father Thomas Merton's "Original Child Bomb," subtitled "points for meditation to be scratched on the walls of a cave," is a bitterly ironic chronology of events, in forty-one short entries, leading up to and around the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in that final year of the next-to-last war to be conducted on earth. The number of nonmilitary professionals to come out straightforwardly for love and human kindness during the last ten years has been phenomenal. Poets certainly have no corner on this category, though among those celebrating it, meaning love, quietly or loudly, are a great many of us: Pound himself, in *The Pisan Cantos,* breaks down for a few lines; William Carlos Williams in *Journey to Love;* Robert Creeley in *For Love* and his several previous books; Denise Levertov in, I think, all of her works. The profound relationship between individuals is examined and found good, or wanting, or both at different times, by Joel Oppenheimer, Robert Kelly, Robert Duncan, Gil Sorrentino, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Clayton Eshleman, Louis Zukofsky, LeRoi Jones, Ed Dorn, Max Finstein, Jerome Rothenberg, Paul Carroll, myself and many others you may never hear of, if that love prove insufficient or atypical. Ferlinghetti I have already mentioned, but he is for love too. I am speaking only of men and women whose bodies of work I know well enough to speak for confidently.

MORE intellectual, though not necessarily cooler, minds seek values in human continuities, a more complex set of relationships: Robert Lowell and John Logan in the family; Charles Olson in his *Maximus Poems* tries Gloucester, Massachusetts, as the concept of city, and the whole of colonial America as principle of drive, forcing, out, and the early mirrors of conquest, settlement, commerce. Other men follow that drive while still avoiding its impact. Gary Snyder, in the temples of Kyoto, still writes of logging, the forestry service, fires, the sea, beautifully. Ashberry, Koch and O'Hara play with all ideas whatsoever, the voyage "away from" included, perhaps because they can do nothing else, and very competently; doubtless they shock the Establishment, by which they are anyway compromised. Others review the traditional values of the Old South in semi-retirement: James Dickey contemplates his hearth and the dog in short neat lines; Jonathan Williams, from a strawberry patch in North Carolina (someone says he is the greatest American writer of light verse living), is mostly critical of aspects of the modern world set against some kind of traditional frame.

Two other men concern me, as intellectuals and poets, toward whom my

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feelings are both warm and respectful, but conflicting. W. S. Merwin is on his own, trying to force his sensibility to record an absolute poetry, not so much of music as of the image, unchangeable down the ages. This sets rather a tension between him and the world, I think, though on the basis of a poem read for the Peace Strike last January, and translations of the Angolan poet, Agostinho Neto [see *The Nation,* February 24], he is as aware as anyone of what the nations hath wrought. The other man is Louis Zukofsky, who has lived quietly in Brooklyn for perhaps the last twenty years, instructing the young at a college, contemplating Marxism, music, European architecture, Western man, his friends, his family and the accidentals, so coolly (and warmly), and in nearly complete obscurity, that I wonder if his reaction to the problems this article concerns itself with might not be a smile and a shrug—perhaps its own kind of continuity as a gesture.

THERE are so many I have not mentioned, men all over this country, all over the world, whose first thought behind the word is "peace," whose pictures of their own worlds reflect the larger one in a way accurate to their own sensibilities and to those of many men, whose music is creating a massive structure whose strands the future, if any, will have no simple job of untangling. The tremendous questioning, denying, affirming, reaffirming and searching out of values can, and is, going on at the bookstalls along the Seine, on the beaches of Spain, in the mountains of Greece, on the plains of India, in the valleys of Japan, the fastnesses of Brooklyn, the sunlit hills of San Francisco, the small, dark night streets of the Midwest, in the rooms with the tables and chairs. It is against all the poet's principles to organize, or to lead. We point, and mumble, or yell, but we recognize the dangers of responsibility. When you are indecisive, we are indecisive. We have the most meager means of communication in a land overrun with communications, but we speak to you, world. We are victims as so many are victims, but we lay out the lines of descent, we enable you to communicate with your neighbor wherever he is and whatever his political opinion; we have words, we think about you and we have the words to say what we think and feel, we even make non-words to show you what we think you are at times. We have had our madmen raving on the mountains or in cages, and our vice presidents sitting in your insurance offices. We have our men manning your ships, conserving your forests, printing your advertisements, prescribing for your wife, teaching your children. Perhaps someday we shall grow up to be politicians or bombardiers. I hope not. We are as helpless as you are, only we have words, and we are not unsympathetic. For if you go, world, heaven knows we go with you.

We are all here beneath you, with our words, each man working his own way, feeding his own or himself, calling his own tunes.

We, in our narrow bed, turning aside from battles:
Each man where he can, wearing out the day in his manner.—E. P. *ibid.*

Talks With Mrs. Bertolt Brecht

Ben Shaktman

HOW DOES one describe Mrs. Bertolt Brecht? In the first place, Helene Weigel's legal and formal name seems an error, although I have seen it written that way once before. She is perhaps one of the world's greatest living actresses. She is also described as a stern, shrewd administrator of the Berliner Ensemble, a theatrical operation in East Berlin that involves millions of dollars' worth of talent and equipment each season.

Some of the actors, directors, technicians and their late-night retinues love her with the fervor of autograph seekers. Others love her talent, but with moderate critical acumen cite its limitations. While still others despise her because of her talents, for the way she reigns over them as a performer and as manager of their artistic and commercial affairs.

Frau Weigel was nearly sixty years old when I first saw her. Her unique beauty struck me immediately: sunken cheeks shielded by stone-sharp cheekbones, large brown eyes quick to gather in the activity of canteen society, still to concentrate on the particular person or idea she might be engaged with. There was always fire in them. More often the warmth of wit, sometimes the whip of a fierce temper could be predicted from those lighted brown flares.

When she was performing the title roles of *Mother Courage* and *The Mother*, the only parts she played during my stay, Helene Weigel seemed to be a thin face struggling to move her small body beneath a cargo of clothes. With folds and folds of skirts, sweater upon sweater worn underneath two quilted jackets, she was costumed against the climates of winter and war. Her own street clothes seemed costumes too—loose-fitting, deeply hued maroon, purple and gray dresses, often highlighted by a high oriental collar that would enhance her sharply boned face and her effect as a small but powerful woman.

Frau Weigel's strength is masculine. Her handshake puts you into direct contact with a muscular expression that also marks her gait and speech. She walks quickly, taking long scissorlike steps. And her voice! Deep-throated, richly trapped by the stuff of her chest and the quantity of nicotine swallowed during a lifelong habit of chain smoking. I have seen Frau Weigel upstaged by her own coughing spells. Offstage, smoking continually, she coughs too often, too deeply.

Helene Weigel was married to Brecht in 1926. During Hitler's rule they were often separated, as Brecht was forced to exile himself from the Nazi executioners. From 1941 to 1948 they were together again in the United States, living out most of their exile in California. Today, Helene Weigel speaks English very well, slightly better than she does French. I have also heard her speak Russian.

After the war, the Brechts returned to Berlin where they began to gather round them the nucleus of the Berliner Ensemble. This group included Caspar Neher, Teo Otto, Erich Engel, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Elizabeth Hauptmann, Ruth Berlau and the actors Busch, Bienert, Gnass, Steckel, Therese Giehse. Their success culminated shortly before Brecht's death in 1956 with international recognition as one of the world's great theatrical organizations, led by a superb director and subsidized munificently by the state.

Very little is revealed about the Brechts' personal life together. Two children were born of the marriage. The daughter, Barbara, is a square-shaped,

BEN SHAKTMAN is a playwright and director who as a Fulbright fellow studied at the Berliner Ensemble, the Comédie Française and the Vienna Staatsoper.

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raw-voiced, temperamental woman, presently acting in the Ensemble and married to the company's most brilliant young actor, Ekkehard Schall. Frau Weigel's son, Stefan, described by his mother as "something of a philosopher who likes to travel," spends most of his time in Paris, some of it on the Riviera, in London and New York, but very little in East Berlin. Frau Weigel said that "He is not a theatre man." Yet, unfortunately, he is one of her trusted arbiters of the translations of Brecht's works.

Frau Weigel told me that Brecht (not "my husband," "Bertolt," nor "Bert") made it quite plain to everyone that his wife ran the business, he ran the art. Interference would not be accepted. In 1948, when the East German government offered to subsidize his company, Brecht formalized their respective responsibilities. Combining the jobs of board chairman, general manager and trouble-shooter, Frau Weigel became the Ensemble's "Intendant," responsible for the entire operation and administration of the theatre. Nearly fourteen years of continuously successful business, the increased size of the company and budget, the additional extension internationally of Brecht's and the Ensemble's reputations, are due mainly to Helene Weigel.

A standing joke at the Ensemble, reserved perhaps for Americans, is that Die Weigel maneuvers the Ensemble with the skill and fiscal sense of a capitalist, on a Socialist budget.

AFTER Brecht died, Frau Weigel retained the Intendant's responsibilities and expanded them to include the tacit artistic direction. However, I do not believe she ever felt capable of articulating Brecht's art. Certainly she embodies his art on stage—an achievement she shares with two other actors in the world, both of whom are in her company: the aforementioned Schall and Ernst Busch.

Helene Weigel needed successors to Brecht, to direct the plays, foster his aesthetic tradition and progress according to its tenets. Two of Brecht's most astute disciples were chosen to lead the followers of his footsteps. Many in the Ensemble felt that Manfred Wekwerth and Peter Palitzch would be trussed by the mantle.

Wekwerth, a slightly sarcastic, extremely diversified talent; and Palitzch, a troubled, sensitive and technically proficient experimentalist, were to revive productions of plays that Brecht had staged and revise the current repertory according to "changing conditions." This is a Brecht phrase that could refer to a political *Putsch* or to the discovery of a capable actor. They were also to direct plays by Brecht that had never been staged, as well as other new scripts and adaptations.

Frau Weigel spoke proudly to me about Wekwerth and Palitzch. She said they were wonderful, true to Brecht and creative on their own. After witnessing their most important production of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, I could not agree wholeheartedly. They revealed a technical proclivity to deception that tarnished the effect created by their few moments of highly original, perceptive staging. However, the important thing is Frau Weigel's faith in the young men; it seems warm enough to burn whatever cords of tradition might hamper them, and to instill in these younger talents the confidence to originate.

"Brecht took from other artists plots, forms, pieces of dialogue. He was guided by them as he created new work. Why shouldn't these new artists take from Brecht?"

Helene Weigel does not consider herself a thinker in the theoretical, philosophical or political sense. This impression is built upon our many conversations — the most important of which revealed as much about the sometimes misfired energies of an accomplished actress as about the perception of a master director.

She recalled for me the final dress rehearsal for *Mother Courage* before it opened in Berlin in 1949. "I wanted to try something at the end of the play, something different from what Brecht directed. I asked him if I could try out an original idea, but refused to tell him what I had in mind. I could only show him." Brecht approved of the trial. The scene was the final one in this play about the supply woman who is carted about the battlefields of Sweden, Poland and Germany during the Thirty Years War by her three illegitimate children. Each child is killed by various circumstances of war from which their mother, Mother Courage, earns her livelihood. At the end, alone, aged and physically battered by the long winters and wartime deprivations, Mother Courage must lug the supply wagon to the next camp, battlefield or burial ground. In Brecht's staging, she drags the wagon stage left, upstage left, crossing right, moving offstage right—a long, deliberate, unending haul. The curtain falls. Brecht made it clear the supply woman would carry on.

"I did all this until it came to leaving the stage at the right," said Frau

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Weigel as she described her actions with beautifully tensed hands moving on the table before me. "At that moment, I pulled the wagon downstage toward the audience, and fell exhausted, allowing the wagon to roll over me. Before I could holler for the curtain to be lowered, Brecht rushed upon the stage, his face aglow. Smiling, he waved the cigar toward me like a flag. I thought I had won my point."

But Brecht did not like her original contribution to the play's conclusion. "He said that after seeing my staging he was more certain that his way was the better choice. My way was too much, pleading for someone in the audience to pick me up, or to stop the wagon. It was not necessary to worry about the wagon rolling on the woman. For if one stopped the other would stop." Frau Weigel said she agreed with his major objection: Her falling brought the narrative "too close" to the audience. Such a *Gestus*—the German theatrical term that means movement, gesture, facial expression, vocal inflection and tone—was too close to what they were accustomed to seeing in the theatre: a helpless character, physically beaten, unable to choose her next step, begging for the audience's pity.

"He told me that Courage had made her choice. She would continue to earn her bread from war. 'What will the audience choose? How would they earn theirs?' That was what Brecht wanted the ending to ask."

In talking together about the problems of preparing American productions of *Mother Courage,* perhaps Brecht's most satisfying play, she had a bizarre choice for the actress who might best portray the title role: Ethel Merman! Frau Weigel was not joking. Her defense of Miss Merman—or, to be more accurate, of the performing style that Ethel Merman represents—clarified some basic facts about the play.

She felt that in America the play must not be spoken in a continental dialect but in a clearly American one. "Continental dialect there would be snobbish and would appeal like an art movie. The unreality would tempt the audience. Here Courage speaks a Bavarian dialect and the play is set in places that our audiences have lived in, are descended from or are heading toward. In England, a Yorkshirewoman should play Courage; in France, perhaps a fishwife from Strasbourg, or Marseilles; not continental, but regional, provincial."

The problem of translating Brecht's plays into English was always part of our conversation. Frau Weigel probed my defense of Eric Bentley's contribution to the effort. While she had great admiration for his scholarship and gratitude for his having been the leader of the Brecht vanguard in the English-speaking theatre, Helene Weigel was unenthusiastic about Professor Bentley as a translator of plays. Her often repeated wish was for W. H. Auden or Christopher Isherwood to consider further efforts at translating Brecht. She appreciated the reaction that the wish might be outdated, but she dealt Eric Bentley a conclusive judgment when she said, "He is a professor, not a poet."

THE concluding meetings between Helene Weigel and myself were devoted to a new play that I had been working on during my visit to Berlin. Her advisory comments were uninhibited and often shocking. She did not proffer them as a critic of dramatic construction, but as an actress who felt strongly about the leading role and needed certain stepping stones from the author to create at least the possibility of a powerful stage presence. At first it was not pleasant to realize that in her hands I was considered merely as a quarryman. However, hers was a passionate interest in a script we both knew she would never perform. I am still grateful for her grasp of my intention, for her energetic experiments in ways to achieve it.

We saw each other last early in the morning, after I had been tasting the smoke and schnapps in an evening reserved for modest goodbys to my hosts. Finally I settled down to some cognac and lemon tea with Frau Weigel. She gave me two very large photographs of herself in the role of Mother Courage and asked me what I wanted her to write on them. I said that I wished her to sign her name and the date. She asked how an American woman would sign her name for a guest—a strange request from one who had lived among the breed. I said that my wife would sign *Mrs. Ben Shaktman* (I later

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To see the whole mountain as peace
with only one peak in sunlight
and the foothills with pine straight up
under the snow fields
is to see it as a sense of space.

What has settled on the mountain
is not its strength but its softness.
I could bury my forehead in it
and I have.
The snow on my forehead was as warm as rain.

A small tree was my shadow when I looked away.

Margaret Nordfors

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learned she wouldn't). She took a scrap of paper and wrote rapidly in a strong hand, *Mrs. Bertolt Brecht.* With that signature before her, she quickly took both pictures in hand and signed them. We kissed, and she turned directly to walk from the canteen. I waited just long enough for the ink to hold and took up my personally autographed photos of one of the world's greatest actresses—signed, *Helene Weigel.*

MUSIC

Benjamin Boretz

SO MUCH music by young American composers is being performed this season that a whole new generation appears suddenly to have emerged. Actually, this is an illusion on the order of a newspaper crime wave, but there has been an unusually good opportunity recently to assess the direction and quality of the work of composers under thirty-five. The surprising discovery one makes is not that much of the music is of poor quality, or cynical, or both — a similarly indiscriminate selection of music from any time would show similar deficiencies — but rather that there are a few composers in the younger group whose works are already considerably accomplished and mature in their recognition of the real demands of serious composition.

Whatever their individual success, such works represent a genuine attempt to compose sounds into a total coherent structure, in which each event is intended as an articulation of an idea rather than a stimulant to audience reaction. The approach of our best young composers is thus close to that of their older colleagues in the American *avant-garde* defined previously in this column (February 17), and the surface of their music naturally reflects this influence.

A measure of the prevalence of the tendency toward "interiorization" is the extent to which even music that centers around an external idea of presentation — such as an instrumental combination or a combination of words and music— is developed according to formal possibilities suggested by that medium, which thus acts as an integral part of the conception rather than as "color." Both Yehudi Wyner's *Sections* for violin and piano, performed on the March 23 concert of the International Society for Contemporary Music, and Salvatore Martirano's *O O O O That Shakespeherian Rag* for chorus and instruments, performed on the March 25 concert of the Princeton Chamber Choir conducted by Thomas Hilbish, take their formal departures on these conceptual terms.

Despite its small scale, *Sections*, like Wyner's earlier *Concert Duo* for the same combination, is an ambitious attempt to integrate materials from a very wide stylistic and expressive range into a dramatic unity. Although one misses, in *Sections*, some of the boldness and textural intensity of the *Duo*, whose pulsating first movement with its single-note rhythmic insistence and growing figurational excitement still makes an extraordinary impression, the recent work is far more refined and selective in its choice of materials and careful in their working out. Thus the opening movement is a splendidly simple statement of an idea of instrumental opposition: the piano opens with an abrupt staccato idea that is answered and opposed throughout by a continuous legato line in the violin, all with consistently well-chosen notes. The second movement snatches up the rhythmic idea that ends the first, and subjects it to a development in both instruments that finally dissolves into a passage for violin with the piano as an accompaniment.

Wyner's deliberate eclecticism demands, however, a constant vigilance of taste and judgment in the selection of materials, and his music sometimes lapses; the second part of the *Duo* especially suffers from the sentimentality of its basic material. Although *Sections* avoids this to a greater extent, there are disturbing incongruities in the later parts, particularly the over-repeated five-note figure of the piano "accompaniment" referred to above, and the literal rhythms of the following violin solo. But Wyner's effort to find a common ground for the whole range of musical style is absorbing and potentially important, notwithstanding the strong internal derivations from middle-period Schönberg and Berg, as well as Elliott Carter. The increasing sureness and refinement revealed in *Sections* encourages the hope that he may succeed.

MARTIRANO'S setting of four passages from Shakespeare comedies has a direct presentational relation to the words that reminds one, on a much more complicated level, of a Renaissance madrigal. Every aspect of its organization, beyond its twelve-tone underpinning, seems to have been suggested by the interaction of the medium (small mixed chorus and seven instruments) and the words. There is considerable sonorous and rhythmic ingenuity in both the choral and instrumental writing, particularly with regard to contrapuntal word-fragmentation and the exchanges of function between instruments and voices. The materials in some sections arise directly from a word-painting idea, such as the staccato trumpet for the fairies' chorus, and the arching groan of the men's voices on the word "snoring," which is very much like the snoring of the soldiers in the second act of Berg's *Wozzeck*. But the very vividness of some of the individual effects is a hindrance to the achievement of a really continuous form. The result is more theatrical, finally, than dramatic, as though the flashes of instrumental and vocal image (rather tentatively projected in this performance) were not conceived in their own terms, but in rela-

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tion to events on an imaginary stage. It is this confusion that seems to have led Martirano astray here, because his other works are remarkable precisely for their naturalness of continuity and genuine invention.

DIAMETRIC to the characteristic idea of the Wyner and Martirano works — the integration of strongly contrasting elements—the Cantata III (on Yeats's "Leda and the Swan") by Peter Westergaard, performed on the March 23 ISCM concert, explores the possibilities of creating a differentiated form from the most severely restricted and tightly controlled materials. The work consists of only two basic elements, both derived from the same twelve-tone idea: the slowly unfolding three-note segments of the introduction that return in varying forms between the vocal sections, whose materials are in turn suggested by the relationships among the segments; and, in the quick, beating vocal sections themselves, the simultaneous combination of parallel forms of the row in contrast to the single-line exposition of introduction and interludes. The instrumentation of marimba, vibraphone, clarinet and viola, is itself highly restricted, but is handled with impressive sonority and control; one wonders if the omission of a brass instrument is a reflection of the dramatic action, which takes place in mid-air. Every dimension of the Cantata is subject to a clear and audible regulation that is entirely musical and gives a wonderful sense of lucidity, honesty and closeness to the poetry that more pretentiously "expressive" music fails to achieve. The performance by Shirley Sudock, soprano, with an ensemble conducted by Gustav Meier was as finely wrought as the work itself.

The Cantata by Malcolm Peyton (on the Princeton Choir concert), to texts from Joyce's *Chamber Music*, is plainly Stravinskian, specifically from the Stravinsky of the period between the *Mass* and the *Shakespeare Songs*. However, it is unlike the usual imitation of the master in that Peyton has gone to the root of Stravinsky's technique, rather than only to its surface, and worked with the materials as Stravinsky himself does, thus achieving, rather than borrowing, similar results. In this, Peyton is aided by a superior ear for instrumental sonority and for the integration of instruments, voices and the sounds of poetic syllables. On this occasion, he was also aided by the presence of Bethany Beardslee as the soprano soloist.

The derivativeness of Richard Hoffman's Variations for piano (on the ISCM concert, played by Howard Lebow) is of a more academic kind, taking its departure, to be sure, from Schönberg, but from the superficially square rhythms and phrase-structures that are the least important and profitable aspects of Schönberg's work. The twelve-tone aspect of the Variations sounds too often like note-counting, and the method of "variation" itself is somewhat rigidly old-fashioned, especially in rhythm and sectional structure. As a result, it is a little hard to realize that the work is carefully and conscientiously constructed, and contains several passages of considerable interest. In his more recent works (the Variations date from 1957) Hoffman appears to have freed himself from the overpowering shadow of Schönberg, and the constriction it evidently imposed on his compositional faculties.

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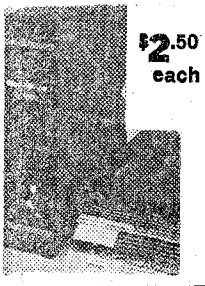
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ART

Max Kozloff

THERE has been great confusion about those idioms in art which define themselves by obvious or emphatic restrictions. We are even beginning to hear once again about the limitations of abstraction compared with the representational, as if that old chestnut had not been fought to death years ago. And arguments are still being waged—if not openly, then by implication—with respect to the greater comprehensiveness of deep space over affirmation of the plane, of the assemblage versus the easel painting, of "all over" as opposed to single image abstraction, etc. Surely one cannot help being prejudiced in favor of whatever seems to be more, and finally most, inclusive of experience. To crave complexity and multiplicity in art, and to place a greater value on a received variety of sensations than on any single unit of vision, is logical and natural. I am myself a victim of that craving. Yet I am frequently disturbed to discover that it is by no means an infallible basis for judgment. Largeness of conception does not guarantee content, and hence is not an indisputable criterion of excellence. Finally, art itself indicates that even the greatest masterpieces are severely arbitrary, because their very choices always imply exclusions. In short, there is some reason for confusion.

I was enough distrustful of my reactions to the "Geometric Abstraction in America" show at the Whitney, therefore, to think that they were perhaps fallible in the manner I have suggested. To be more precise: It was not a matter of bewilderment by the pictures themselves (which couldn't be milder or more accessible), but of feeling disconcerted that I was, after all, making the mistake of thinking less was really less, instead of more, as was clearly intended by the majority of the exhibitors. Conceivably I was taking physical restric-

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But always the smile (no mind) but a smile.
Public pot. Could one weep? No more than laugh.
Or think. Or feel. A zoo without bars.
Disgust, vomit, a floorshow. Or nothing. I
Prefer that: a cleared house. Then I could
Think. But no such luck. But think of the
Company you're in: every genius who ever died.
And then the dinnerbell sounds for the human heart.

Tracy Thompson

tions at face value, and hence running the danger of judging the mere format instead of the performance.

The issue here, however, properly begins with another question. What does it mean to speak of the Geometric Abstraction typified in this exhibition as limited? That it eschews reference to organic life, and that it eliminates all forms that have no traceable finite geometric basis, are two of its foremost considerations. But following upon them, geometric abstraction usually rejects visible brush strokes or any irregularity of handling, while color, a sensuous element, must either be schematized in accordance with the design, or subordinated to the apprehension of each shape. This is an art, furthermore, of fixed contrasts, of absolutely "hard" and discrete edges (not a single work here lacks them), and of merely quantitative relationships. It generally confines the aesthetic encounter to a judgment of these relationships, and all emotional affect or the perception of nontangible qualities or associations are theoretically ruled out. Having determined his vocabulary, a Geometric Abstractionist can put his images into operation only by one principle — placement. An analogy to literature suggests not the relatively luxuriant sonnet or even *haiku* verse, but a form in which you have only five or six words, but are free to arrange them in any order desired.

IF I HAVE been giving a rather forbidding description of Geometric Abstraction, it is intentional, but not, I think, greatly exaggerated (with the exception of the latest examples). Severe though its tradition has been, and as its rules are, however, it does not seem to me either invalid, or even inherently unpromising. Nothing I have said, for instance, prevents intensity and energy, let alone formal imagination. But a peculiar difficulty of this style is that it pitilessly reveals and then levels any practitioner who is in the slightest degree less than a genius. Dull or merely competent fellows are more ill-served by it than by any other idiom; for success can be attained here only by the utmost power of mind, dedication and sensibility. In this respect Geometric Abstraction, like most of its simplifying relatives, is a breeding ground of bad painting and sculpture.

Of these, unfortunately, there is more than a fair share at the Whitney. Europe had been leading us in the style for many years, and perhaps still does, but this exhibition reveals America's long-standing efforts to catch up. Ozenfant, Hélion and Albers were all vital (if that doesn't sully the word) influences in this country, only to be exceeded by the example of Mondrian. And Mondrian's work was a mixed blessing because while it was extraordinarily seminal, it was so lofty and beautiful that no one could really follow it without looking exceedingly wretched in comparison. Then too, the lack of an artistic culture which burdened a good many of our artists between 1920 and 1945 is hardly concealed by Geometric Abstraction. Finally, in its most pristine exposition, it cannot be said to have attracted the finest or most inquiring spirits. Pereira, Gallatin, Xceron or Lippold, to cite only a few of the better-known names, are not major talents. Moreover, those artists whose geometric work we can actually compare with their production in other styles—Balcomb Greene, Roszak, Perle Fine and Gugliemi, are far less than distinguished figures. For the greater length of its career in America, the movement displayed at the Whitney was a provincial outgrowth, greatly removed in time and place from its initial sources of inspiration. This fact, coupled with the information that so few of our geometricists seem to have realized, much less satisfied, the inhuman demands of their style, accounts for so much of the deplorable feebleness and triviality which is presently being exposed.

Under these circumstances, it is surprising how many of the exhibitors do retain some individual sense of identity. That is, you can recognize them. But even here, the distinctions are chiefly of interval, scaling or material, which may become trademarked, but not personal. Paradoxically, the style demands complete self-effacement for the attainment of personal expression (Mondrian). The only alternative is to compromise the basic tenets of the style (Stuart Davis). Two other individualists, Calder and Moholy-Nagy, were endowed with too much sense of humor to stay within Geometric Abstraction for very long. These four artists never confused preciseness of contour with clarity, nor rigidity with order.

Recently (e.g., some of the canvases dated 1960 or 1961), misconceptions of this sort about Geometric Abstraction were finally being re-examined. Belated attempts to come astride of the history of the last fifteen years in painting have thus altered the character of the latest section of the show. Accomplished veterans of the old line, such as Bolotowsky, Diller, Barnet and Glarner, still maintain their effectiveness, but the inclusion of the younger George Ortman or Frank Stella deflects the show's theme into paths of illusion and mystery that suddenly appear to be unexplored. Geo-

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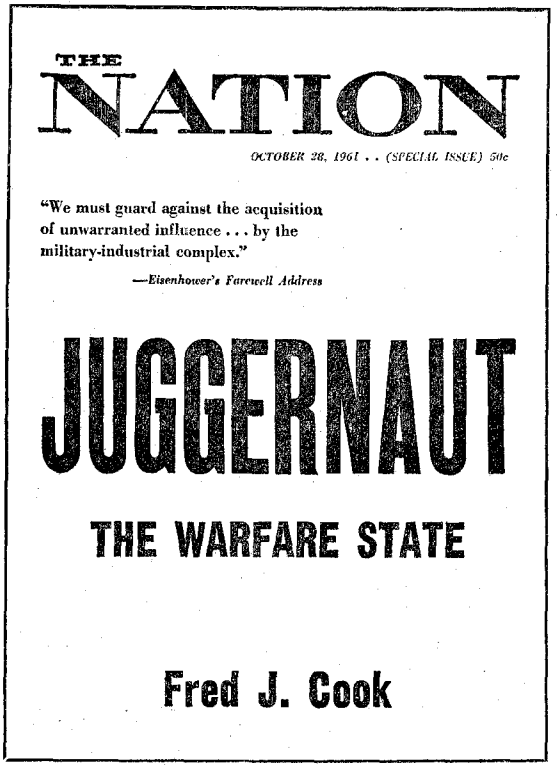
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metric forms, it is discovered, can look lonely, express irony, confuse themselves with objects, mimic the monotonous, equivocate about space and contain, emanate or deny light in ways that suggest that there has been a rather shameful failure of invention up to now. Contrasted with these new possibilities, the ideals of classicism and purity which dominated the earlier career of Geometric Abstraction now appear to us as totally innocent and nostalgic—adept, to paraphrase one critic, at transforming all the troublesome impedimenta of modern experience into the syntax of a logical dream. The style represented the desire to return to a condition of completely stable relationships, ruled over by a sense of the absolute. Yet, as its own admirers are leaving the fold, and artists from alien areas are profitably raiding it, Geometric Abstraction is being challenged on an ever-increasing scale. The result can only be the collapse of a concept, with all the complications, ambiguities and reinterpretations which that implies. At this point, I can happily return to believing that "more" really is more.

ARCHITECTURE

Walter McQuade

CHICAGO has long been a more vivid city architecturally than New York. There is even a heritage of architectural heroes there. One was Uncle Dan Burnham, who said, "make no little plans," and who, himself, made some grand ones. Another was Louis Sullivan, probably still America's greatest artist in architecture, whose Chicago business buildings — among them the Carson Pirie Scott department store in the Loop — are in their way as deep and unknowable as Greek temple ruins. And as moving. Frank Lloyd Wright, contemporary both with Louis Sullivan and with us, was a Chicago architect; the suburb, Oak Park, is still almost a Williamsburg of Wright's early, turn-of-the-century work. (Unfortunately, it is a Williamsburg without a protective patron; the old Oak Park is today teetering on the edge of historical extinction, even Wright's Unity Temple, built there in 1907, has recently had a rather close call.)

There are a number of other Chicago architects — Dwight Perkins, for one example — who became great characters in their community, and whose buildings did so as well. The City of Chicago still

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has an untamed quality, visually, and this may be what has made it hospitable to strong buildings, making their designers and financiers step outside the slick conversational style of most city architecture and attempt to make statements. Chicago today certainly isn't a freight-handler any longer or, at least, doesn't wear a freight-handler's clothes. Paper is what it handles now for the most part, like other cities. Yet the tone of the place still is not tepid.

Even in the deepest canyons of Chicago's midtown Loop you are never entirely unaware of nature's force, and this may be one reason for the strength. The pedestrian can feel Lake Michigan just a few blocks away; those thousands of square miles of water out there make the congestion and architectural denseness of the Loop fairly comforting. Similarly, the Wall Street section of Manhattan is helped by the immensity of the harbor and the ocean beyond. These waters are invisible behind the buildings, but they are there. However, the Hudson and East Rivers are not quite wide enough really to relieve the feeling of compression in the midtown Manhattan streets. These are still dominated by the industrial presence of the New Jersey and Long Island City shores.

Chicago also has Michigan Avenue, perhaps the most imposing street in America. The grandeur of Michigan Avenue is not just its width, although it is very wide, nor its diversity, although it does pass by railroad yards, office buildings, stores, the river, fancy hotels and apartments and a long sand beach. The characteristic thing about this avenue is that it still has an uncrowded ease; there are any number of sites with only small structures sitting on them, waiting to be used for strong buildings — not perfunctory sites, but interesting ones in terms of surroundings and focus. And when you traverse Michigan Avenue, public works — bridges and beaches and parks — actually seem to outweigh the buildings in their effect on you. It is a fairly rare American big city that is not dominated by commerce. The effect is lordly.

BUT evidently the spaciousness of Chicago, on other avenues as well as on Michigan, is now in for an assault. In the later 1940s and 1950s, the immense building-boom that rocked Manhattan missed Chicago. I was there a few weeks ago, however, and things are beginning to happen. If you roam around the city — near the lake, especially — you come across numerous pits and frames and nearly finished structures, an astonishing quantity of them. It is not all good architecture by any means, but not as bad as you might expect in other cities. Even the bloodless hand of the speculative builder, with its polished fingernails and steely rings, seems a little less pallid in Chicago than it does elsewhere.

Nothing shows better the tenacious strength of Chicago than architect Bertrand Goldberg's pair of round sixty-story towers sited on the Chicago River a block or so off Michigan Avenue, in the newspaper neighborhood. The two towering buildings thrust up beside the hardheaded, horizontal *Sun-Times* Building, and look over it toward the hard-nosed, vertical Gothic glory of the *Tribune* Tower on Michigan.

Marina City, which is what the towers are called, is well along in construction. Its two main elements are very impressive, their central elevator and service cores shooting upward, complete, to a height of 585 feet, their rings of floors growing upward more slowly. Each of the two towers will contain twenty stories of garage space, storage space, laundry areas, and so on; then, above, 448 apartments, all with balconies. A two-story block around the bases of the towers will be commercial rental space, and down on the river will be a marina for 700 boats.

It is a simple concept — a combination of Frank Lloyd Wright's tree-form building and Le Corbusier's *Unite de Habitation* at Marseilles. Slick, but dashing. When the preliminary drawings for the pair were first published, an English architectual journal commented, not

Lament

(from the Spanish of Blas de Otero)

The little girls are multiplying out loud,
me for you, you for me, and both of us
for those whose soul, even, is really too much
for them, the little girls sing it out loud
to see if they can catch God's ear once and for all.

Me for you, you for me, and all
for a land at peace and a better country.
The public school girls cry out to heaven
but heaven will have nothing to do with the poor, it seems;
I can't believe it. There must be some error
in the multiplicand or in the multiplier.

Let those who have braids undo them,
those wearing little underpants drop them
quickly, and those with nothing but a tiny seashell
put it out in the sun,
and all together recite out loud
me for you, you for me, the both of us
for all who suffer on this earth without so much as a
peep from God.

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unfairly, "corn on the cob." But under construction, in their emerging reality, these structures are merely spectacular. The cores look like castle keeps; the rings of garages and apartments look like a smooth tower of Babel. It is not Louis Sullivan, but it is evidence of Chicago's energy on the loose again in building, and perhaps this will help produce another Louis Sullivan.

LETTERS

(*Continued from inside front cover*)

"a hideous but irrelevant physical tragedy."

As for the father—the most interesting of the four characters—Mr. Hatch implies that his inadequacies have nothing whatsoever to do with Karin's insanity, passionate understanding of a saint." Yes. But Karin is only too aware of what is happening to her, and all around her (the diary episode). She, more than the others, realizes his weaknesses, and is further isolated by this knowledge. Had he been saintly, Karin's light would have at least been extinguished in a world with hope; she may not have seen the black spiders in the crack in the wall.

Her loss of vision is exactly what gives a special irony to the film's concluding dialogue between Minus, the son, and his hypocrite father. "He is a psychological demonstration of the thesis that any lie will be believed if only it is big enough." The father probably does not believe himself, but Minus does. Images come to us, whether by madness or hypocrisy or honesty — and they always bring our most personal truths. For Minus, father's platitudes have a wonderful sound, although it is critically more significant that his father spoke to him at all. Were he a saint, the point would be banal. His falseness begs our forgiveness and Minus' understanding.

New York City EDWARD C. HUME

. . . or Melodrama?

Dear Sirs: I withdraw my reference to Mr. Bergman's honor: it is not good criticism to impute motives. However, I do detect in this distinguished director's work a tendency to reach for strength by methods of extreme visual shock, and the instances of it disturb me as being more examples of virtuoso boldness than of solid craftsmanship.

As for *Through a Glass Darkly*, I would differ with Mr. Hume at the point where he says that the heart of the drama lies "in the very adjustment — or fear of adjustment — of her family's real vices and virtues to Karin's illness." I felt that one learned almost nothing beneath the surface of these characters: did the husband hope that she would kill herself, was the father moved by anything more than self-pity and self-regard, could the brother recover from seduction by his sister? The answers to such questions, it seemed to me, were pushed aside by the director's indulgence in physical horror. Nor do I see how we can know whether Karin would have been spared the spiders if her father had been a more generous personality. Her insanity was inherited; she was not being destroyed by her associates, but by her genes. Perhaps the actions of those around her could hasten or retard a little the complete collapse of her mind, perhaps her last frenzy could have been a little less excrutiating, but the agony is so overpowering and so inevitable that small fluctuations are not really significant.

The final scene — in which father speaks to son — is intended, I think, to inject some hope into the grim account. But the boy has grasped at a straw that will not sustain him: he is certain to discover this, and to be even worse off than before. The serenity of these closing moments is of course an enormous relief after the emotional battering that immediately precedes it. But it is a false serenity achieved by violence and confirms my feeling that basically the picture is a melodrama of dubious intellectual or artistic content.

New York City ROBERT HATCH

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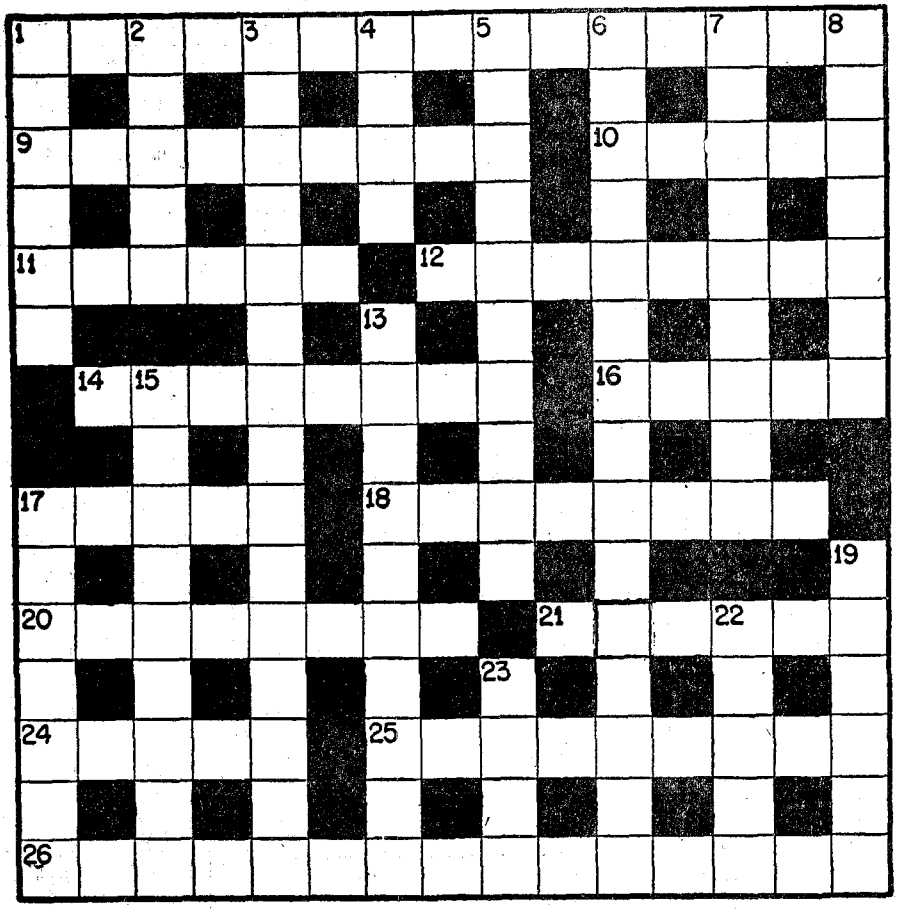
Crossword Puzzle No. 959

By FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS:

1 The winner who demands the chips might show up in your suit. (15)
9 Rhetoric's likely to confuse such a singer. (9)
10 Is there some point to 16's ruin? (5)
11 Not oil — or is it? (6)
12 A battle drawing might be made from it, though certainly not by a Laureate of the Union. (8)
14 How one might refer to some pointers? (8)
16 Harvests a rather spare crop, evidently. (5)
17 As wet as anything else likely to go down the drain! (5)
18 Evidently nothing is left for ultimate agreement. (3, 5)
20 A little 9 should be good for treble. (8)
21 A wolf might see that you don't get your lumps! (6)
24 Pertaining to what might be connected to the back-bone? (5)
25 Characteristic on the scene of a standing ovation? (9)
26 His sign doesn't imply his pull doesn't affect him! (8, 7)

DOWN:

1 One of the things Molly cried about. (6)
2 Only first-class accommodations on it? (1-4)
3 Damaged motoring article, having to do with what is sometimes termed eternal. (15)
4 Such a ceremony sounds quite proper. (4)
5 Carole is in a dither about a very warm region in France. (2, 8)
6 In 2 down, the act of appointing a minister might get you into trouble with your boss. (15)
7 The first and last letters with a sort of charade to represent the chinaberry tree. (9)
8 Pneumatic tubes? About time to create explosions! (7)
13 Breaking laws avoids subsequent repudiations. (10)
15 Another name for him could come straight out of Euclid. (9)
17 "The Home of the Brave"? (7)
19 Certainly not the color of garnet. (6)
22 Does she appear at sixty minutes past midnight? (5)
23 The boss of the game? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 958

ACROSS: 1 Evening star; 9 and 13 Well-content; 10 and 29 Understate; 11 Odor; 12 Banners; 15 True-blue; 16 Saturn; 18 Stir up; 21 Listings; 24 Baroque; 26 Spiking; 28 and 17 Just think of it! DOWN: 2, 30 and 31 Volunteer Fire Departments; 3 and 8 down Neutral corner; 4 Node; 5 Sorrows; 6 Aloft; 7 Repair; 14 Meals; 19 Teacup; 20 Prussia; 22 Supreme; 23 Gantry; 25 Outre; 27 Cast.

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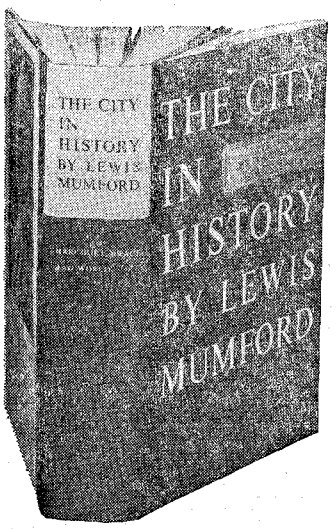

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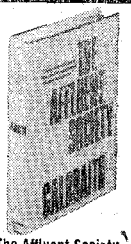

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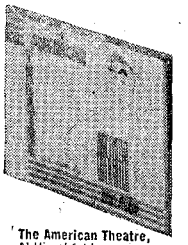

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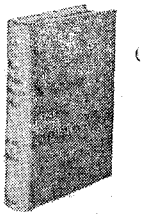

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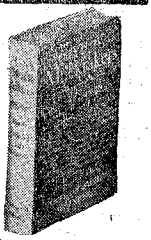

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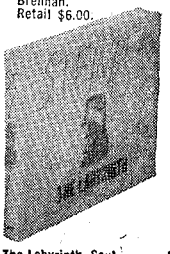

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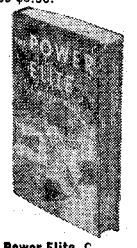

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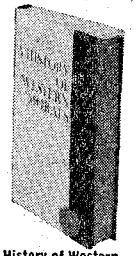

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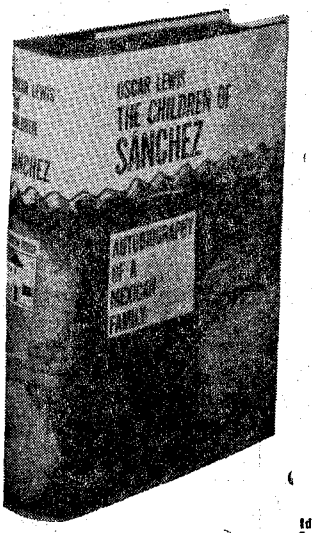

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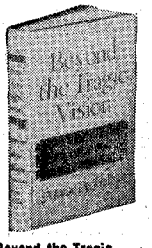

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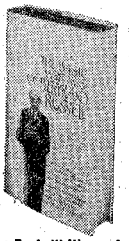

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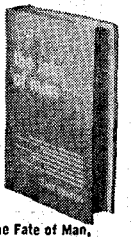

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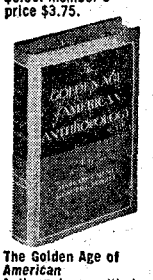

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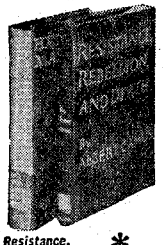

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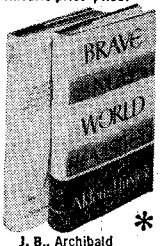

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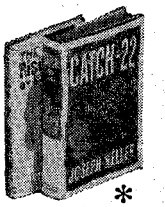

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